PRIVATE EYE

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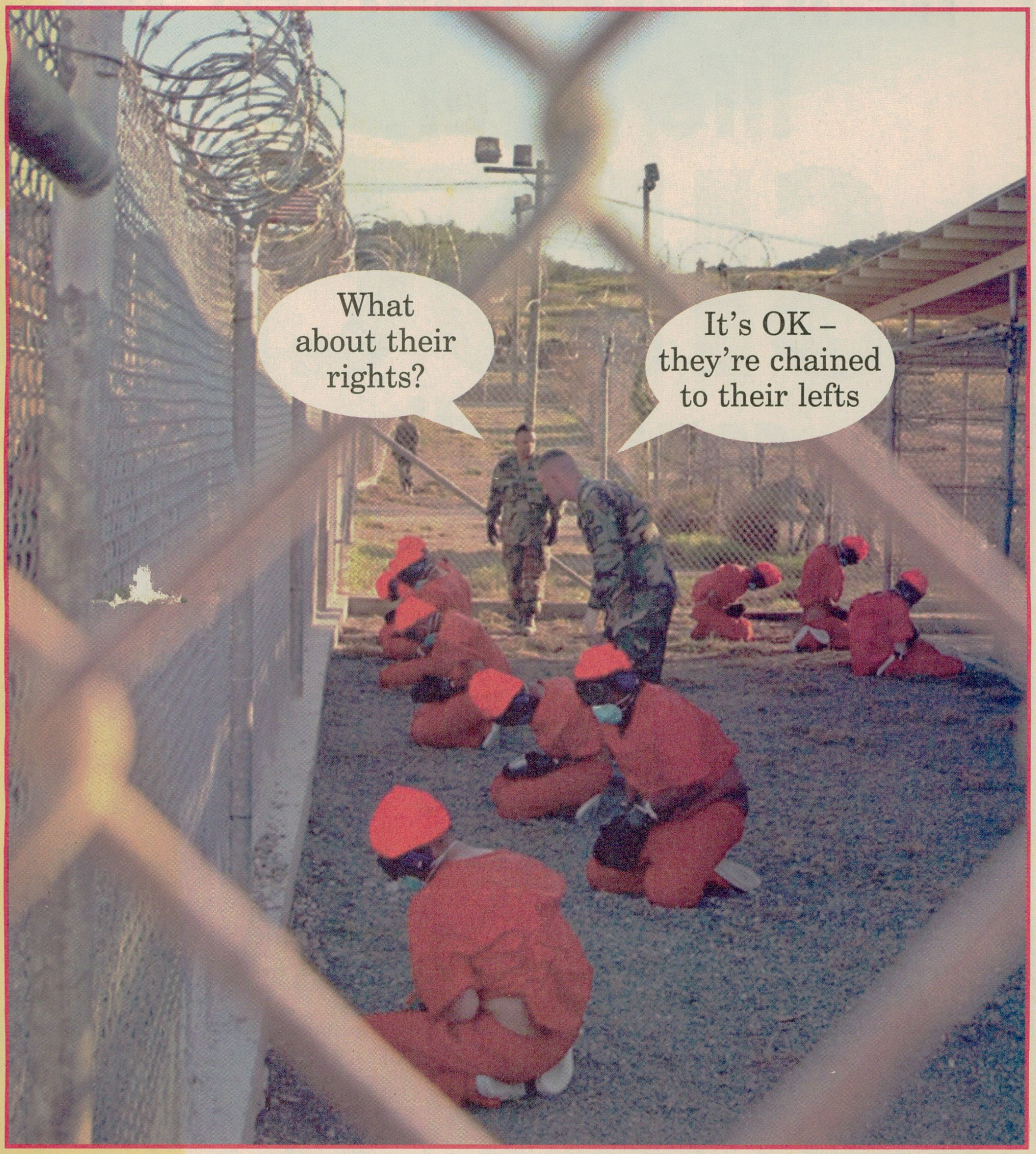
U.S. PRISONERS SHOCK



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Gnome

THERE is no scandal surrounding the unfortunate bankruptcy of the giant energy consortium Gnomeron.

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E. Strobes
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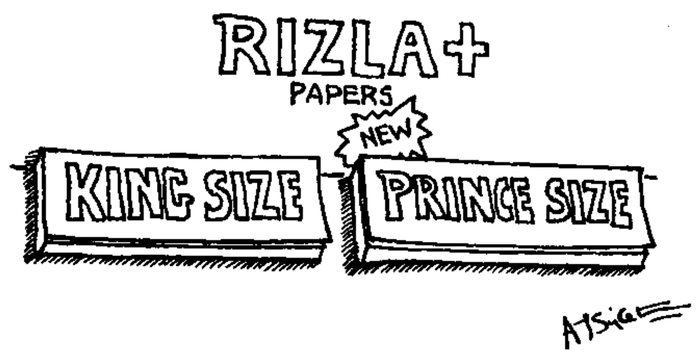

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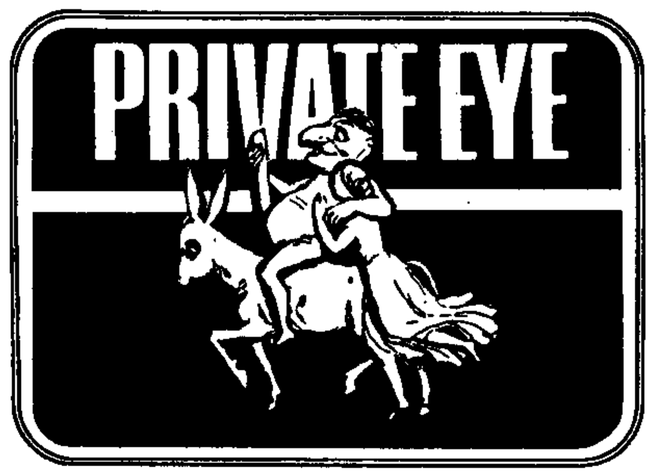

Taking no prisoners

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● *How business infiltrates Whitehall; Tony the arms salesman: In the Back* **26, 27**

THE Enron scandal has finally exploded across the British media, but it has still not managed to do much damage to the "new" Labour government.

The seedy British history of Enron and its accountant Arthur Andersen should, however, seriously embarrass Tony Blair.

As the *Eye* has pointed out many times, Arthur Andersen was banned for 12 years from government work by the Tories because of its involvement with shyster John DeLorean. The ban, however, did not diminish the enthusiasm of "new" Labour for the firm and its sister organisation, Andersen Consulting.

In 1994 Patricia Hewitt, former press officer to Labour leader Neil Kinnock, became head of research at Andersen Consulting; and in 1996 the firm arranged a special seminar for 100 Labour frontbenchers in Oxford. In November 1997, six months after Tony Blair was elected, a deal was struck in which the government's legal action against Arthur Andersen – and the ban on the firm doing government work – were dropped. Patricia Hewitt left Andersen in 1996 and is now secretary of state for trade and industry.

Replying to questions from the *Financial Times* on 11 January, Labour conceded that Enron had been a generous contributor to party funds, but "denied any link between donations to the party and policy decisions". This must have come as a relief to Hewitt's predecessors as trade secretary: Margaret Beckett, Peter Mandelson and Stephen Byers.

In 1997 and early 1998 Beckett carried out Labour party energy policy. She stopped the Tories' "dash for gas" to safeguard the British coal industry. After intense lobbying from American companies and government, she was replaced in 1998 by Peter Mandelson, who promptly lifted the government's moratorium on gas-fired power stations. (Documents proving the lobbying campaign were published in the *Guardian* in August 1999). Mandelson also nodded through the sale of Wessex Water to Enron.

Mandelson was sacked in December 1998 after publication of his massive home loan from fellow cabinet minister Geoffrey Robinson. Robinson resigned at the same time, though his adviser, Chris Wales, stayed at the treasury where he is still a member of the council of economic advisers. Wales had learnt his trade as a tax expert at Arthur Andersen and had helped Robinson and others on the prawn cocktail circuit round the City to raise funds for Labour. By the summer of 1999, press reports heralded a commitment by Labour ministers to the "dash for gas" they had previously opposed. Applications to build new gas-fired stations were promptly granted, including two from Enron. Interestingly, Enron Europe was run until July 2000 by Ralph Hodge. "New" Labour rewarded him with a CBE in the 2001 new year's honours "for services to the gas and power industries".

● *See Slicker, page 28, 29.*

THE deep sense of loyalty to its workers felt by the big ports firm ABP, which is engaged in a ferocious industrial battle with experienced pilots on the Humber (see *Eyes passim*), has been demonstrated once again in the tragic case of Michael Barton.

Mr Barton, an experienced welder, had struggled all night to fix the huge lock gates at Alexandra Dock, Hull, when he was crushed to death by a falling steel bar weighing nearly two tonnes. The inspector for the health and safety executive (HSE) told Hull crown court on 11 January that the accident could and should have been prevented, but ABP "failed to meet its responsibilities".

The judge was shocked to hear this was the second death due to ABP negligence that had come to court in the last six months. Last July ABP was fined £200,000 for its failure to prevent a similar accident to Barry Hattersley, who was loading a barge when a steel bar fell on him. In the Barton case, Judge Michael Mettyer imposed another fine – of £170,000.

THE National Union of Journalists is preparing to welcome its newest member: the cigar-chomping, banana-guzzling Richard Desmond, proprietor of *Asian Babes* magazine and the *Daily Express*. Dirty Des filled in his application form two weeks ago. In reply to the question about his salary he wrote merely "See *Sunday Express* Rich List."

Amazed staff at NUJ headquarters consulted general secretary John Foster, who confirmed that anyone who "handles editorial material" is eligible. Since Desmond dictates the content of each day's front page and oversees its design, this is clearly not an obstacle – though some might doubt his ability to remain bound by the NUJ's code of conduct and ethics for long.

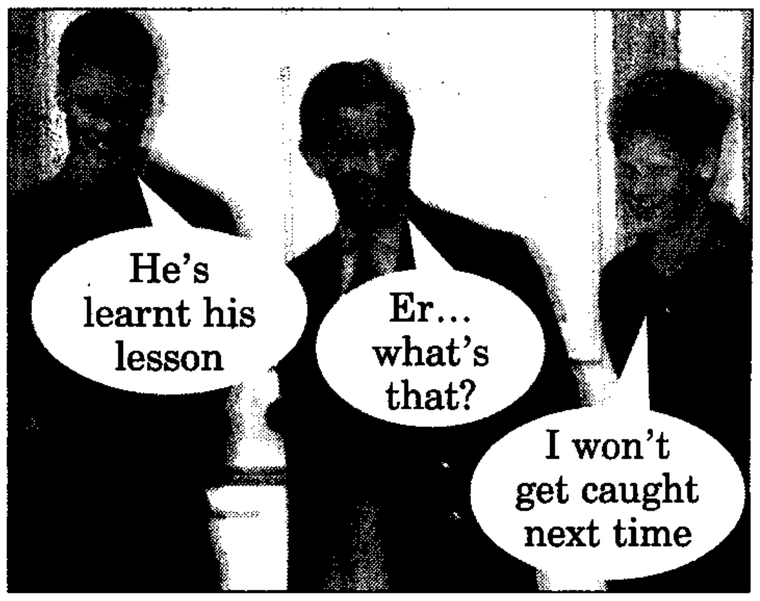
By coincidence the NUJ chapels at Express Newspapers were due to meet this Thursday to discuss the company's offer of a flat-rate £750 pa pay rise for hacks – far less than most other Fleet Street papers are paying. If members vote to take industrial action, will Dirty Des end up picketing the Grey Lubyanka and yelling "scab" at his own executives?

THE government's defence of its reluctance to criticize the US for its treatment of al-Qaeda prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has been less than impressive.

At a recent briefing parliamentary lobby hacks were told: "Well, at least the prisoners weren't all summarily executed."

7.30 The Good Life
A debate on the political future of Northern Ireland. *Sun TV guide*

WHEN HARRY MET DADDY



Street of Shame

"THE Asian Policeman, Poison Pen Letters... And The Questions the Met Still Has To Answer" was the stunning headline over a double-page spread in the Daily Mail on 12 January.

The accompanying piece by Rebecca Fowler told the story of detective sergeant Gurpal Virdi, framed by the Metropolitan police on the fantastic charge that he had sent racist mail to himself and fellow police officers. As *Eye* readers know well, the sergeant was found guilty of this offence by three commanders of the Met in March 2000 but was later cleared completely and awarded £150,000 by a tribunal.

The amount of damages Mr Virdi will eventually get from the Met has yet to be decided but he is determined to stay in the police. Now that his case has been settled, he has been getting much more favourable publicity – such as the effort in the *Mail*. But what about the questions the *Daily Mail* still has to answer?

Throughout the Virdi saga the police point of view was put with consistent clarity by the *Daily Mail*. The day after he was arrested after a search of his home, for instance, the *Mail* carried an "exclusive" by Peter Rose, chief crime correspondent, recording the arrest and commenting: "The officer's arrest will come as a shock to anti-racism campaigners who claim the police service is riddled with white bigots."

When Mr Virdi was convicted by a disciplinary tribunal, the *Mail* splashed the decision triumphantly and later whined in angry headlines about his campaign to clear his name and to be compensated for his unfair sacking. When the police refused to apologise to Mr Virdi, the fact was heavily publicised – without criticism – in the *Daily Mail*.

LAST July George Harrison was deeply distressed when the *Mail on Sunday* quoted his old producer Sir George Martin as saying that the ex-Beatle "knows he is going to die soon and he's accepting it perfectly happily".

Harrison, who was not at all happy about his cancer, issued a statement professing himself "disappointed and disgusted", while Martin flatly denied ever saying the words attributed to him. It transpired that the fabricated quotes had come from WENN, a showbiz news agency founded by former *Sunday People* hack Jonathan Ashby, whose claim to fame is that he exposed Boy George's drug habit by rummaging in his bins.

Lo and behold, WENN is now in serious financial trouble and has laid off "a substantial number of staff" on their return from the Christmas holidays. "Very difficult times have befallen WENN," says a letter to a former employee who was claiming unpaid salary.

No doubt Harrison, wherever he is now, will be glad to know that his karma is still working from beyond the grave.

"You'll have to go by yourself – I've no shoes"

THE *Daily Mirror*'s Pride of Britain extravaganza shows how flexible is Pious Piers Moron's conversion to allegedly "serious" and "principled" journalism.

When the preposterous St Paul of the red-tops ordered execs and showbiz hacks to line up glowing tributes from celebs to promote the awards, showbiz agents were told their stars could have copy approval "as long as they say nice things about us". Some *Mirror* hacks even went so far as to hint that cooperation might ensure that the celebs escape the kind of rubbishing Morgan's Organ has lately doled out to Kate Winslet, Richard'n'Judy and others.

So much for Moron's self-righteous campaign against the newsworthiness of "two-bit celebrities" and his contempt for stars who demand copy approval. Some agents have been heard murmuring "blackmail", and they may have a point. Take the case of Michael Parkinson, who was surprised to find his chat-show ripped to shreds in the *Mirror* – not in a TV review but all over a prominent news page, for no apparent reason. Shurely Pious Piers wasn't miffed because Parky had refused to give the paper an interview, declined to be a Pride of Britain judge and, sin of all sins, let it be known that he thinks Moron's conversion to serious journalism is nothing but a "gong-seeking stunt by an egotistical chancer"?

Even some of Piers' friends are now worried that if his ego swells any further it may explode. Since collecting the "newspaper of the year" trophy at Granada's *What the Papers Say* awards last month, Moron has been telling cronies he's outgrown the *Mirror* and is being courted by Conrad Black to replace Charles Moore at the *Telegraph*. He also expects Murdoch to come cap in hand shortly with a choice of taking over either the *Sun* or the *Times*.

But while gullible awards judges seem to have fallen for his posturing as "Piers the Serious", the readers appear to be more cynical. Latest circulation figures show sales of both the daily and Sunday titles (where Moron is editor-in-chief) at their lowest since World War II.

LORD Portsmouth, one of the financial backers of Neil Hamilton's failed libel action against Mohammed Fayed, flew out this month to the Slamdance Film Festival in Utah to watch a new film about Benji "Bin" Pell, the man who raids the rubbish bags of the rich, the famous, their lawyers and their accountants.

Last July the judge who presided over Hamilton v Fayed, Mr Justice Morland, ruled that it would not be just or reasonable for Fayed to recover costs from Hamilton's backers given the circumstances of the case. These circumstances included the allegation that documents which Pell had stolen from the bins of Hamilton's counsel, Desmond Browne QC, were sold to Fayed.

Thank You For The Rubbish – It's Worth Millions, directed by Iain Jones, was one of 12 films shown at Slamdance, a rival to the better-known Sundance Film Festival. The film which is co-produced by jewellery heir and Scientologist, John Mappin, was nearly never made.

In May 2001 Pell began legal proceedings against Mappin to whom he had given £80,000 to pay for Jones's travel costs and expenses, accusing him of falsely representing Jones as "the most powerful person in Hollywood" and the man who had introduced John Travolta – like Mappin a Scientologist – to Quentin Tarantino. In fact at the time Jones was a Hollywood hairdresser studying at film school in Los Angeles. The case had a happy ending, however, and Pell was persuaded to allow Jones to accompany him on his midnight sojourns to the streets of central London, filming as they went.

According to Jones, Pell continues to be employed by several national newspapers which give him the use of their offices by night and pay him through cleaning companies he has set up to process his earnings. The film production notes also reveal that the *Eye's* own bins are still at risk. "In spite of the magazine exposing Pell's activities, shortly afterwards, Jones was able to follow Pell as he made a haul from outside Private Eye's Soho offices."

WHILE old fashioned Vietnam era bombs and planes like the "Daisy Cutter", B52 and Hercules appear to have caused most damage to the Taliban, newspapers still look to high tech, science fiction-style weapons to fill space.

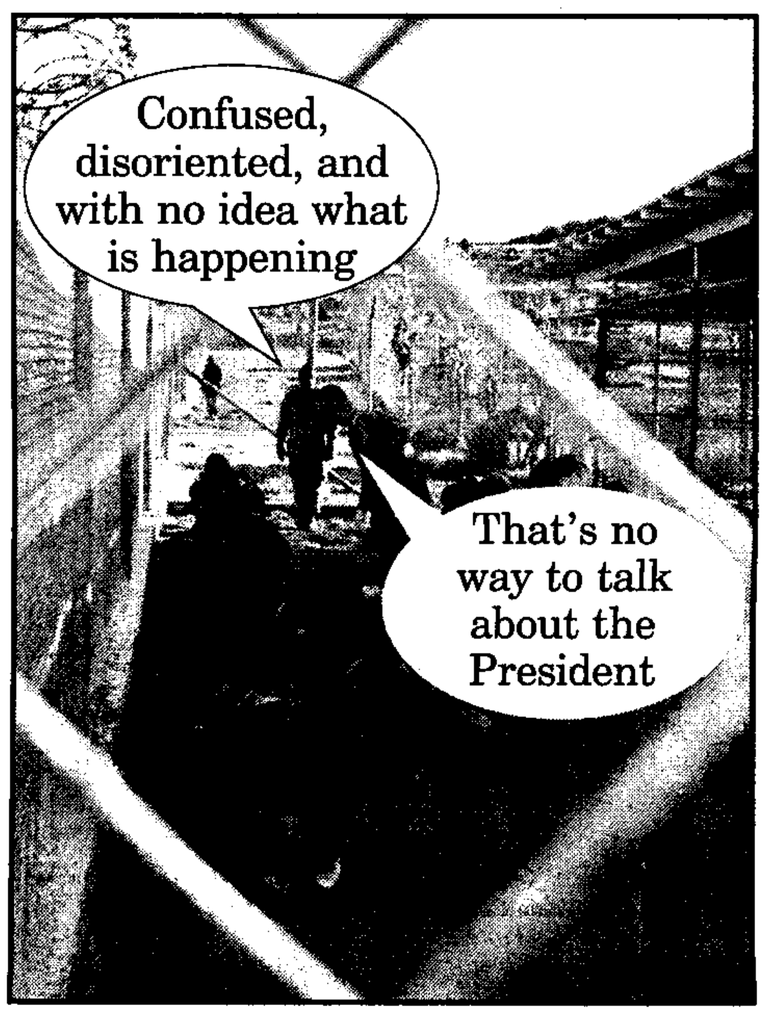
The latest toy in the headlines is the RQ-4a "Global Hawk" unmanned drone. As the military correspondents were keen to tell us, this 44ft-long pilot-less plane can fly for days trying (unsuccessfully) to track down Osama bin Laden.

Strangely they were less keen to report that the Global Hawk was also one of America's few casualties when one crashed on 1 January. Like its little brother the Predator, it seems the Hawk has more weaknesses than overexcited hacks cared to admit.

"WORDS That Should Be Banned: *Detox*." Thus Zoe Williams in *Guardian Weekend* on 5 January, though she added that banning "detox" was scarcely necessary since "I know that no one ever uses this word".

Well, almost no one. Hannah Pool's beauty column in the same issue of *Guardian Weekend* was headed, er, "Detox treatments".

U.S. PRISONERS PT. 2



BAD TASTE CORNER

HOLLAND & BARRETT, the clean–living health food people, must be having second thoughts about the music accompanying their latest TV advertisement: *Goody Two Shoes* by none other than, er, Adam Ant.

BT, meanwhile, has shown great sensitivity post the Selby rail disaster in wording its latest internet advertising banner for the BT 24–hour internet connection. "How much sleep do you really need?" it asks cheekily. Presumably that depends on whether, having spent all night on the net, you're intending drive over anyway railway bridges in the morning...

CHURCH NEWS

THERE are three parties in the Church of England, bless them all, and you can tell them apart by the way they write anonymous letters. The prime minister's appointments secretary, William Chapman, has asked for comments on the various candidates to be the next archbishop of Canterbury, but even if he hadn't asked he would get them in plenty: anonymous phone calls (the *Times* had one of these denouncing the Bishop of Rochester); anonymous letters (the first have already come in to the *Eye*); and emails signed with silly names like Thad Oggz, Steve Trot and Armitage Shanks.

Some of this gets into the newspapers. Already we have had one candidate described in an anonymous phone call as "a Paki papist" and another, by a fellow bishop, as "a posturing peacock". It could all be thrown away except for the off-chance that some of it might be true. Because the candidates for archbishop are appointed by a committee meeting in secret, and because they do not even officially know that they are candidates, everything that is known is in fact gossip anyway. So it is important to be able to decode it.

It ought to be a safe bet that anyone accusing a fellow Christian of homosexuality is evangelical, since this is the sin they are determined to wipe out from the church. But in fact it is the traditionalist gays who believe that everyone in the CofE is really one of them. Everyone is supposed to have been gay at theological college. So Bishop X, known in his youth as Gertie, is now spoken of as an outsider for Canterbury? Expect letters saying that he'd come out if he weren't so frightened of his wife. Bishop Y has explained he wants his priests to be celibate? You will be sent the witticism of an anonymous friend: "I didn't hear the bishop calling for celibacy when I had his cock in my mouth."

Liberals have an advantage in church politics because they don't have to make an effort at anonymity: they need only go on Thought for the Day and everyone forgets their names immediately. But they are, in their quiet ways, quite capable of imagination. Who else would believe that Cherie Blair, a devout Roman Catholic, had urged her husband to appoint Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury simply because she was so bored and disgusted by Carey's conversation at state banquets that she wanted to ensure he was upset by the choice of his successor?

'Lucifer'

JUST FANCY THAT!

Sun, page 1, Wednesday January 16
'SUN GETS PERV LAW CHANGED'
Home Secretary David Blunkett last night ordered new laws to ban perverts who entice young girls to strip.

Sun, page 3, every other day
Young girls are enticed to strip by David Yelland

HACKWATCH

Pot Shots

PRINCE Charles has often been vilified by the tabloids as an inadequate father. Then the *News of the World* discovers that he's been so negligent – and so frequently absent – that he didn't realise Prince Harry and his chums were getting boozed up in the basement every night and smoking joints. Cue a fusillade of indignant editorials about Charles' parental shortcomings?

Er, not quite. "Courage of a wise and loving dad," raved the *NoW*'s own editorial, describing the Prince of Wales as "thoughtful and enlightened… a shining and enviable example of wisdom among the Windsors… a modern king in the making."

This grovelling was, of course, part of the deal struck between *Screws* editor Rebekah Wade and her chum Mark Bolland, Charles's spin doctor: you cooperate with us on the story and we'll pat you on the back in our leader column. Rather more puzzling is the willingness of other newspapers, which had no such obligations, to serve up similar gush. "Every caring parent in the land," the *Sunday People* declared, "will be full of sympathy and praise for Prince Charles today."

As ever, alleged "experts" (who don't know Prince Harry or Prince Charles) were much in demand to talk rot. Dr Raj Persaud apparently being unavailable, the *People* turned instead to psychologist Susan Quilliam. "Prince Harry could be suffering from 'second son syndrome'," she suggested. "A lot of teenage lads rebel and dabble with drugs and drink but in Harry's case it could simply be because he is the second born." Or, on the other hand, "it could be he is a natural rebel or having a bad time at school and is turning to his peer group for attention." Who knows? But, Quilliam insisted, "we mustn't give up on him" – whatever that may mean.

For further guidance, A Doctor was on hand. "The media uproar over the antics of Prince Harry during his holidays seemed excessive," Dr Thomas Stuttaford informed *Times* readers, helpfully revealing that the prince's excesses were pretty mild "when compared with the behaviour exhibited by the truly disturbed adolescents whom I used to meet". For once, however, Dr Tom was eclipsed – by the *Grauniad*'s resident junior doctor Michael Foxton, who penned an insufferably cute open letter: "Dear Harry, Your dad's asked me to have a word with you about this drugs business… I'm not going to tell you that drugs are bad, because you'll just look at me like I'm your dad in that clinic, and ignore every word I say. But you've just got to watch yourself, Harry… It's best that you don't take drugs and alcohol, but if you really have to, at least do it sensibly, for everyone's sake."

And so to the Glendas. "Of course Prince Harry's privacy should be respected," Ros Coward

"I think it's time you and I had a little chat"

wrote in the *Guardian*. Guess what conjunction comes next? "But that shouldn't prevent his problems opening up a discussion about drugs, adolescent behaviour and emotional pain." Coward kick-started the discussion herself by announcing that Harry "has the exact profile of an adolescent who might be using substances to deal with complex and painful feelings". For another perspective, the *Grauniad* wheeled out its teenage columnist Anna Stothard (whose dad, by remarkable coincidence, is the editor of the *Times*). "Harry fits all the criteria of a healthy London adolescent," she confirmed. "I got drunk in my basement when I was 14."

Not so fast, however. "The press has been flooded with commentators anxious to say that Harry's behaviour was utterly normal," teen-expert Lynda Lee-Potter harrumphed in the *Daily Mail*. "I don't accept this convenient myth… Harry has behaved like a spoilt, rich, drunken yob." Sniffier still was Deborah Orr of the *Indie*, who produced 1,100 words deploring all the words that had been devoted to the affair. "This story is, ultimately, just gossip about the royals, after all, and not something that a serious paper should consider important." More generally, she condemned the media's appetite for stories about celebs taking drugs. Might this by any chance be related to her husband Will Self, who was sacked by the *Observer* in 1997 after rival papers revealed that he'd been, er, taking drugs?

Meanwhile over at the *Daily Telegraph* one concern overshadowed all others in the mind of Old Etonian editor Charles Moore: how to protect the reputation of his old school? A piece was hastily commissioned from one Simon Randall, who left two years ago. "Prince Harry's admission that he used drugs while a pupil at Eton does not mean they are more widespread there than at other schools," he reassured *Torygraph*-reading parents. The drug scene at Eton is in fact "smaller than in many schools". Thank God for that.

HOW GLENDAS WORK (PART 94)

"IN the past couple of weeks there has been much speculation and snide innuendo about the relationship between Nigella Lawson, whose husband John Diamond died of cancer three weeks ago, and advertising guru Charles Saatchi… The truth is no one REALLY knows what their relationship is all about, but who the hell could blame Nigella if she HAS formed an attachment to another man? It's a miracle how this young woman has coped, not just with the death of her husband from cancer, but her mother and sister too… If the friendship of another man helped her cope with that, then who are we to judge?"

— Carole Malone, *Sunday Mirror*, 25 March 2001.

"Am I the only one beginning to feel a bit queasy about Nigella Lawson's very public love affair with millionaire Charles Saatchi?… It's been just nine months since her husband John died of throat cancer, and while Nigella had probably prepared for John's death long before it actually happened, I do feel she's acting with what seems to be indecent haste… No one begrudges Nigella her happiness. But to pursue it QUITE so vigorously QUITE so soon after her husband's death just doesn't seem right."

— Carole Malone, *Sunday Mirror*, 20 January 2002.

In spite of fears that the defeat of the Taliban government might reduce numbers, this turned out to be considerably larger than the October 13th march and rally with at least 50,000 taking part. This time the demonstration was organised by the "Stop the Wart Coalition"

Non-Violent Resistance Network newsletter

IN THE TEAROOM

SOMETHING very odd is going on in the parliamentary Labour party. Since the new year a weird paradigm shift has taken place that has seen scores of backbenchers – including many who would once have been identified as "new" Labour "clones" or "Blair's babes" – suddenly signing-up for the awkward squad.

MPs who before Christmas would have defended the massacre of the innocents if their pagers had told them that was government policy now cheerfully voice downright heretical opinions about health, education, transport, "the war against terrorism", law and order – you name it. Not in public. At least not much yet. But certainly between one another in the tearoom where, for the first time since 1997, Labour MPs are actually slagging off the prime minister within eavesdropping distance of the whips.

Consequently, Downing Street has noticed; yet there's no panic at the political centre. In fact, there's a cunning ruse. Instead of treating the dissidents to the firm smack of party discipline, they're going to be indulged. Cabinet ministers themselves will come over all leftie in their public rhetoric. In place of Alan Milburn trumpeting about handing over the NHS to private companies, we'll get a lot of social justice blather from the point-man for this "fresh emphasis", the social security secretary Alistair Darling.

There'll be a lot of "remembering what we were elected for" pledges to halve child poverty and so on. What about the workers? Yes, the unions will get a look-in too – or at least the odd concession here and there to match David Blunkett's jury-trial concession to the civil liberties lobby. No new money of course, but bags of "political focus" on the needy and less fortunate. "Redistribution" will no longer be Gordon Brown's dirty little secret, but Tony Blair's (yes, he'll be on this bandwagon too) proud boast.

How long will it last? That's up to the *Daily Mail*. The paper's bound to cut up rough about Labour reverting to type. Eventually there will have to be a tilt back again; but Number 10 reckons on a three-month abstinence from sucking up to the middle class – unless the *Mail* gets really savage, in which case Mr Darling will be put back in his box sooner than planned.

'Urquhart'

BUSTLING Labour party chairman Charles Clarke – Neil Kinnock's aide-de-camp in the 1980s – is remembered by some ex-staffers as something of a bully and he is still exhibiting this quality in his new job.

However, his recent ham-fisted intervention in the selection of the Labour candidate for the South Wales seat of Ogmore – where lefty *Tribune* editor Mark Seddon was kept off the list – so infuriated colleagues that four of them rounded on Clarke in a Commons corridor.

Clarke was rendered almost speechless as MPs John Cryer, Anne Clwyd and Paul Flynn laid in – only to be followed by the lumbering figure of Brian Sedgemore. A couple of days later astonished lobby hacks, passing the closed door session of the weekly parliamentary Labour party meeting, were treated to a repeat performance. The hacks held their ears to the committee room doors in order not to miss Clarke getting a taste of his own medicine.

GREAT embarrassment for Labour MP and church commissioner Stuart Bell.

His daughter Yvonne was recently arrested and fined for disorderly conduct at Dubai airport and his 19-year-old son Malcolm has just pleaded guilty to stealing cheques from the office of George Galloway MP and using them to obtain money and goods by deception.

Bell's Teeside constituents may take a tolerant view of their MP's children's misbehaviour, but tolerance has its limits. For Bell not only employs his son as a researcher in the Commons, but his wife as secretary – both paid by the taxpayer. Unlike other local MPs, Bell does not have an office in the constituency and rarely holds surgeries. So furious were some locals at Bell's behaviour that they were preparing a complaint for parliamentary standards commissioner Elizabeth Filkin. Before the complaint could reach her, however, the privileges committee effectively sacked her. And who is a member of that committee? Step forward… Stuart Bell!

FORMER Labour minister David Lock, who lost his seat in a shock result at the last election to retired hospital consultant Richard Taylor, an Independent standing in defence of a local hospital (see *Eyes passim*), has a new two-day-a-week, £40,000-a-year government job in charge of the national criminal intelligence service (NCIS) and the national crime squad.

He replaces former Tory MP Sir John Wheeler, 61. Sir John, a former prison governor, has spent much of his life working in the field of crime-fighting, but is obviously not half so qualified for the post as David Lock. Lock was junior minister to lord chancellor Lord Irvine and bravely switched his former opposition to the effective closure of Kidderminster hospital when his government proposed it. He then lost his seat, which he had won in 1997, by 17,640 votes.

"Hang on and they'll give you an office in Westminster"

WILL HUTTON, the great "new" Labour thinker and visionary, has never been a fan of "outsourcing".

"It has been the growth of contracting out and part-time work that has exposed millions to the vagaries of an ever-fluctuating labour market; robbed in the name of market 'flexibility' of pension rights, minimum income, sick pay and employers' national insurance contribution," he wrote presciently in his magnum opus, *The State We're In*.

The craze for "contracting out", aka "outsourcing", has of course intensified under "new" Labour and enriched specialist "support services" firms such as Capita (*Eyes passim*) at the expense of the job security of millions – just as Hutton described. Even his own career has had its ups and downs. After an unimpressive spell as editor of the *Observer*, he is now chief executive of the new Labourish think-tank, The Industrial Society. In a little-reported deal, last month it flogged off its training arm for £23m to… oh dear… the outsourcing kings, Capita!

IN LAST week's *Spectator* Douglas Hurd claimed his policy of "virtuous intervention" in the Balkans "saved thousands of lives in Bosnia". Many people in Bosnia might beg to differ – as would anyone in Britain who recalls how Hurd consistently refused to let the Bosnians defend themselves against the Serbs.

His appeasement of Slobodon Milosevic reached its logical culmination when he left the government and actually went into business with the Butcher of Belgrade. Still, if Hurd is so confident of his record no doubt he'd be willing to defend it in open argument with his critics.

Apparently not, however. Shortly before Christmas the ICA in London invited the Cambridge historian Brendan Simms to join a discussion on British interventions in foreign wars, which was being held on 11 March in collaboration with the *Economist*. Simms, whose latest book is a thoroughgoing indictment of the Bosnian policy pursued by Hurd and other Tory ministers, was delighted to accept – especially when he heard that Hurd himself had also been invited.

Alas! Last week Simms was informed by the ICA that he would no longer be welcome. "Douglas Hurd has, on realising you were also on the panel, I'm afraid, had something of a tantrum," the ICA's talks organiser, Rachel Cottam wrote. "The issue is rather complicated as it's an event I'm setting up in collaboration with the *Economist*, and so I'm not really in a position to fight it… I wish I were in a position to be more forceful with Hurd – and do apologise for this awkward situation."

In his *Spectator* article, Lord Hurd argues that the idealistic Tony Blair should be grateful if "those of us who are by nature realists… sometimes tug at his sleeve". But if Hurd has a power of veto over fellow-panellists – and has such a guilty conscience that he isn't prepared to debate with someone who might disagree with him – it seems unlikely that anyone at the "discussion" in March will be permitted to tug his lordship's own sleeve.

SEVERAL readers have pointed out the implausibility of Peter Mandelson's claim, during a recent speech in Jerusalem, that his grandfather Herbert Morrison smuggled weapons for the Stern Gang into Palestine in 1935 – not least because the Stern Gang didn't exist at the time. But Mandelson's more general point – that his grandpa was a stalwart supporter of Jewish and Zionist causes – holds good.

Or does it? The diaries of Lady Violet Bonham-Carter give a rather different impression, particularly in this entry for 28 October 1942: "I went… to the Home Office to a deputation to Herbert Morrison led by Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hinsley and Whele, the head of the Free Churches, to ask for the admission of 2000 Jewish children from Unoccupied France [i.e. Vichy France] into this country to prevent them from being shipped off to Germany. Morrison spoke for three quarters of an hour from a dusty departmental brief and refused *everything*. I have never seen a deputation so mishandled and so angry. They could have torn him to bits…"

Next time Mandy is invited to give a speech in Israel no doubt he will set the record straight.

KEVIN BOND, £200,000-a-year head of the new police standards unit, is not the only former boss of pisspoor Yorkshire Water to have won Tony Blair's approval (*Eye* 1045).

Little-noticed in the new year honours list was a knighthood for Charles Brandon Gough (*Eyes passim*), ex-chairman of the gaffe-prone water firm now known as Kelda, and director of the ill-fated Alchemy bid to take over Rover cars.

Sir Brandon will be arising because of his hard work chairing the doctors' and dentists' pay review body.

ONE of "new" Labour's firmest commitments is to the privatisation of pensions so effectively carried out in the 1980s and early 1990s by the former Tory government. Every attempt has been made by government ministers to stress ingenious schemes available for people to boost their hopelessly inadequate state pensions by private schemes relying on investment on the stock market.

In 2000 the economic secretary to the treasury was the loyal "new" Labour MP for Welwyn Hatfield, Melanie Johnson. To her fell the privilege of launching a bold new pensions initiative pioneered by her boss, Gordon Brown. On 11 July 2000 Ms Johnson boasted that "increases of up to 30 percent in their retirement nest egg and greater freedom in their working could be possible for some personal pensions savers using the new Individual Pensions Account (IPA).

"The new IPA," she trumpeted, "will particularly benefit those on moderate incomes, including part-time workers and those taking family or educational career breaks." To prove it she teamed up with social security secretary of state Alistair Darling to publish a joint paper heralding all the advantages of the IPA. On 11 December 2000 yet another treasury press release hailed the coming of "the new flexible individual pension account saving vehicle" which Ms Johnson promised "will be even more attractive to savers with a concession exempting certain transactions from stamp duty reserve tax".

The attractive new IPA came into effect on the same day, 1 April 2001, as the other government scheme to entice future pensioners to pensions linked to the stock exchange – the stakeholder pension. Melanie Johnson's pride and joy – the IPA – continued, and has turned out to be a total flop. Only one company, Richard Branson's Virgin Direct, offers IPA and that only in what the *Financial Times* describes as "a makeover of a form of personal pension which Virgin already offered".

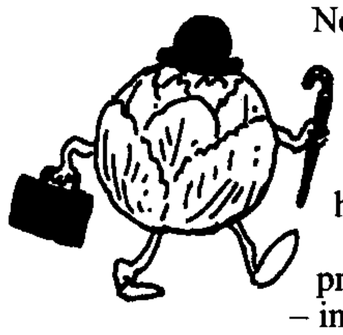
Melanie Johnson meanwhile has been moved out of the treasury and into the department of trade and industry where she is parliamentary under secretary of state.

'Backbiter'

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE regular complaints about media bias from Geoffrey Martin, head of European Commission representation in the UK, have taken a knock of late.

Though there certainly is bias, Ulster-born Geoff has been very upset by suggestions that EU funds for his native land were being creamed off by Northern Irish terrorists, as well as conventional criminals. His view that such allegations were media fiction were undermined though when the then Royal Ulster Constabulary raided the offices of EPIC, an EU-funded group supposedly rehabilitating loyalists released from the H Blocks, and found weapons rather than text books.



Now the auditor general for Northern Ireland has released a report which examines five EU-funded schemes in which fraud has taken place.

EPIC – or the Ex-prisoners Interpretive Centre – interpreted the rules in such a way as to get £170,659 of European social fund money for non-existent business activities, including a phantom mobile chip shop which was supposedly using retired terrorists as fish fryers but which didn't actually exist.

Even more imaginative, although apparently not linked to terrorism, was the fraudulent use of £90,000 of EU money by Playboard, a Belfast charity. This was supposedly running the EU's New Opportunities for Women (or NOW) scheme in which unemployed females were trained to help children play. The auditor discovered that six of those into whose bank accounts the EU money was paid were men. Inspector McKnacker is expected to begin an investigation soon.

Meanwhile Playboard – "the lead agency for children's play" – has been awarded the contract to administer another round of (non-mythical) EU "peace and reconciliation" funding anyway. Last week John McKinney from the EU special programmes body visited the play house (an undistinguished office block in Belfast city centre) to deliver fraternal relations and £3m. Some game!

COURT CIRCULAR

COVERAGE of the *News of the World*'s Royal Dope scoop has concentrated in the broadsheets on the three-way fix between the *Screws*, St James's Palace and the Press Complaints Commission. And much has been made of the friendship between Charles's spin supremo Mark Bolland and his partner, PCC director Guy Black, and *NoW* editor Rebekah Wade. It is said Bolland is playing a dangerous game... Palace old guard... knives being sharpened... etc, etc.

The Buck House old guard can bitch as much it likes, however, because the three people who make the decisions – Charles, the Queen and Lord Luce, the lord chamberlain – are happy with the "results" Bolland is achieving. The Harry story gave a kick-start to his strategy of trying to shake off Charles's "stuffy" image in mummy's golden jubilee year.

After the triumphs of the past 10 days, the chances of Bolland now running a unified royal press operation (as predicted in *Eye* 1043) have increased rather than diminished. Lord Luce, who is planning the new press office, has expressed his admiration for Bolland's action to colleagues. He is to ask him to contribute a paper on how he would see such an office working – in effect, inviting him to draft his own job description.

Brenda, meanwhile, followed events from Sandringham and merely lamented that Harry had been so foolish as to get caught. Other royal children have been more careful not to get found out.

MEANWHILE, golden jubilee year has started better than expected, with Brenda scoring so well in the Today programme poll to find the greatest monarch, that she came second only to the original good queen Bess.

There has, however, been discontent in the palace over the handling of jubilee preparations. Tessa Jowell, the government's jubilee supremo, has caused unease with her undisguised attempts use the celebrations to rebrand the monarchy in "new" Labour's glitziest image. She so upset Lord Levene that he resigned as chairman of the jubilee steering group within weeks of her appointment last year. And the normally urbane Robin Janvrin, Brenda's private secretary, has been overheard cursing after meetings with Jowell. It was Janvrin who had to explain that the Queen would have nothing to do with any major event of celebration on 6 February, the actual 50th anniversary of her accession – because it marks the day her father died, a point which Jowell had not grasped.

'Flunkey'

"Mum, Dad... I'm a teenager"

LEGAL NEWS

AN indigant letter arrives from Messrs Sue Grabbit & Runne. Acting on behalf of former Tory party chairman Sir Jeremy Hanley, chess impresario Raymond "The Penguin" Keene and businessman Alan Lubin, they ask Lord Gnome to "refrain from further attacks on our clients" following the piece in *Eye* 1044 about Brain Games Network plc, a company set up two years ago by Keene and chaired by Hanley.

The *Eye* will be happy to stop exposing the antics of Keene and co when they stop talking rot.

Take, for instance, the purchase by Brain Games of "the entire share capital" in three companies called Praetor Ltd, Brain Games Ltd and Chess Associates Ltd. As part of the deal, Keene and Giloberg Finance Ltd (a Swiss finance company in which Lubin was involved) received shares to the value of £220,000. Yet, as we pointed out, none of the three firms had ever traded.

In their letter, Sue Grabbit & Runne (aka Atlantic Law) protest at the implication that the companies were virtually worthless. Yet the only evidence they can produce is that one of them, Chess Associates, owned the rights to the name English Chess Association – "a valuable asset". Oh really? How many members does the Association have? How much income does it make? Keene knows the answers as well as we do.

Chess Associates Ltd had been dormant ever since its incorporation in September 1998 (as Havendisc Ltd), and the total value of its capital and reserves at the time of Brain Games' purchase was just £300. The *Eye* has spoken to several reputable and knowledgeable people in the chess world, but has yet to find one who would pay more than tuppence for his "Association".

Equally absurd is the lawyers' reply to our allegations about the chess website internetchess.com – which, along with two domain names, was sold by Chess & Bridge Ltd in May 2000 for $100,000 (about £60,000). During their negotiations with Keene and his chum Don Morris, the owners of Chess & Bridge had been under the impression that the purchaser was Brain Games. Only when the final contract arrived did they discover that the site was in fact being bought by Giloberg Finance. They were also unaware that, even *before* signing the contract, Giloberg had already arranged to sell it on to Brain Games for £290,000 – thus netting an instant profit of £230,000 for Giloberg at the expense of Brain Games' investors.

Atlantic Law say that the original $100,000 price was a bargain, but insist that the £290,000 for which it was sold on immediately was not "absurdly inflated". Again, the *Eye* has spoken to experts in the business of chess websites, but has yet to find one who accepts that the instant mark-up of almost 400 percent "represented genuine value", as Messrs Keene, Handley and Lubin maintain.

We also noted that Brain Games' company secretary Suzanne Martin was forced out last February after a board meeting at which she queried an apparent "black hole in the accounts". (At the same board meeting, Sir Jeremy Hanley agreed that there was "little doubt that Alan [Lubin] has been using money creatively", adding that they must all keep quiet lest "we might be done for negligence, and not be able to be directors of any other company".)

In their letter to the *Eye*, Atlantic Law flatly deny that Martin was dismissed. "Her claims are completely untrue. In fact, she resigned." How odd, then, that Ms Martin herself received a threatening letter from Atlantic Law last week which referred, inter alia, to "the reason for your dismissal". Before sending any further missives to the *Eye*, perhaps Messrs Sue and Grabbit should at least try to synchronise their story with Mr Runne.

FTVE

Bloody Sunday (ITV1)
Sunday (Channel 4)

FOR generations of international movie-goers the phrase "Bloody Sunday" has triggered images of Peter Finch and Glenda Jackson acting out modish sex lives in John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, shot in 1971. But, if Channel 4 and ITV1 get their way, that title will now prompt images of 13 civil rights marchers, shot in Derry in 1972.

These rival two-hour dramatisations of the events currently being considered by the Saville inquiry are scheduled on television in Britain (within a week of each other) but will be released as movies in other countries and have openly cinematic ambitions.

They might sit more happily there, in an arena where people expect fiction, because it's on television – screened among news bulletins and current affairs shows – that the genre of drama-documentary most shows its central flaw: the desire to be taken as fact while using the techniques of fiction.

Written and directed by Paul Greengrass, ITV1's **Bloody Sunday** is a classic illustration of the problems. Based on evidence given to the Saville inquiry and other official records, Greengrass's film constructs brief scenes, shot in the cool, snooping style of observational documentary.

In this way, the television grammar of reality is used to give dangerous weight to scenes which are inevitably a guess and which contain invented dialogue. Even more riskily, this surface of objectivity covers highly subjective characterisation and casting. Ivan Cooper, the MP who organised the march, gets his case made to the audience by James Nesbitt, the twinkly Ulsterman from *Cold Feet*, while Maj-General Ford, in charge of the British army on the day, is Tim Pigott-Smith from *The Jewel In The Crown*. Danny Boy v Colonel Merrick: er, who do you think the audience will support?

Channel 4's **Sunday** also uses sarky casting, with Christopher Eccleston, a specialist in playing weaselly bastards, as Maj-Gen Ford. But what's really surprising is how different the two films are. A small number of scenes – a civil rights banner drenched in blood, a mendacious press conference by Major-General Ford, a para's boast of having fired off 20 rounds – appear in both but the overall look and sound is notably different.

Where *Bloody Sunday* is cool and tries to look like news, Jimmy McGovern's version for Channel 4 uses the glossier stock and background music of movies such as *In The Name Of The Father*. McGovern's previous work – particularly *Cracker* and the film *Priest* – have shown him to be a very emotional and Catholic writer and his account of Bloody Sunday often focuses on the culture and rituals of the Catholic community with teary scenes of mourners surrounding open coffins in parlours.

The problem, as previously in McGovern's drama-documentary work (for example, *Hillsborough*) lies in his definition of what a fact is. As usual, there's a proud caption stating that every scene is based on a document or interview. But several scenes suggest that McGovern ignores the old BBC / Reuters rule – that at least two independent sources must verify a story – and accepts as fact a claim from one, possibly biased, source.

For example, in *Sunday* there's a scene in which the paras relax with a game of snooker on the night of the massacre. When a Catholic priest appears on television, one soldier shouts: "Fenian bastard!" This is typical of several exchanges of racist bravado. But how can McGovern – or the viewer – be confident that such private scenes really took place as depicted? Who was the source and might they be repeating legend or settling scores? Any writer could find several sources for the claim that extra-terrestrials landed in New Mexico in 1947, but that doesn't mean they did.

In comparison with, for example, the movies of Oliver Stone, both films are historically responsible and accurate but they are true to a Catholic / nationalist perspective which is so standard in the television industry that it has come to be confused with objectivity.

While the specific army orders and actions of that Sunday in 1972 almost certainly were an act of neo-colonial savagery, the concentration on that single event risks misleading viewers who know nothing of the context. Both films end with previously decent Irish lads signing up for the IRA. But there's a difference between the contention that Bloody Sunday was a great recruiting sergeant for the IRA – which is clearly true – and the troubling suggestion in both dramas that the massacre was entirely responsible for The Troubles.

While some in the British army at the time clearly had colonial attitudes, the soldiers were not there for purely imperial reasons but to protect a majority population which felt threatened by nationalist terrorism. Not only is this half of the argument omitted, but the only Protestants included in these movies are ones who take the Catholic line. Let's be clear about this. The problem is not that there is another side to Bloody Sunday – which was state-sponsored slaughter – but that there are other sides to the story of Ireland.

For audiences – especially younger viewers, especially American ones – to be shown that the story of Northern Ireland consisted of racist soldiers mowing down innocent peace-marchers is deeply worrying. It's fine for drama-documentary to protest that each scene is backed by a document or an interview but rarely has it been so well demonstrated that what matters is which pieces of paper you read, who you talk to. If the ITC had teeth, it would insist that ITV1 and Channel 4 now make Enniskillen or Warrington as companion pieces to these powerful but sleekly partial films.

'Square Eyes'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: In which H.G. Wells novel does an inventor travel in a machine of his own making?

Contestant: *The Simpsons*.

AR: Which calendar month was named after the first Roman Emperor, Augustus Caesar?

Contestant: June.

AR: What word beginning with A is another name for the white of an egg?

Eddie "the Eagle" Edwards (for it is he): Yolk.

DUMB AMERICA

AR: Which American president wrote 30 books, including Theodore Roosevelt, An Autobiography?

Contestant: Herbert Hoover.

(Answers: 1. The Time Machine. 2. August. 3. Albumen. 4. Theodore Roosevelt.)

MEDIA NEWS

MUCH merriment at White City over Tony Blair's appointment of Lord Birt as a "blue sky thinker".

When it comes to "looking at things which might arise in 15 or 20 years", Birt's record is pisspoor. It was Birt who spent £40m moving news and current affairs staff from Broadcasting House to White City. A mere three years on and they're all going to move back again, leaving the purpose-built, multi-million pound Stage Six studio complex at White City with an identity crisis.

Furthermore, almost as soon as staff arrived at White City it became clear it was too small. So a huge new building is under construction nextdoor, designed to release space and merge "the best of broadcasting with exciting leisure and retail opportunities". With news and current affairs moving back to BH, there'll doubtless be a need for another "blue sky" rethink.

ITN has not been renowned for its groundbreaking news stories of late, but a recent report from consumer affairs correspondent Chris Choi has brought the ailing media outlet to a new low.

The item, broadcast on the ITN evening news, concerned a new gadget which allows viewers to watch digital TV for around £100 without paying a subscription fee. Are ITV Digital owners, Carlton and Granada, also ITN shareholders, so desperate to woo new digital viewers that they have resorted to forcing advertisements upon a once independent news team?

GOING LIVE

THE BBC's *Ten O'Clock News* went live to Jennie Bond outside a pitch-dark Highgrove on 13 January for the latest on Prince Harry's drinking and smoking binges (as already revealed in full in that morning's newspapers).

"All that's happened is that his exploits have become headline news throughout the world" explained the royal expert helpfully, kicking off six whole minutes of similar guff. Not bad for a 12 minute bulletin.

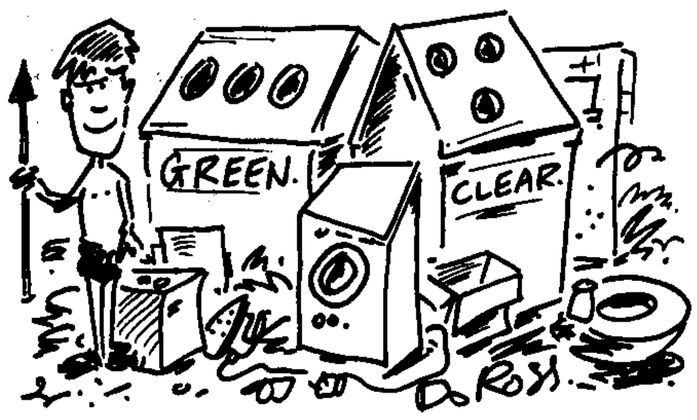
JUST FANCY THAT!

"The Catholic conspiracy, so long imagined and so exquisitely dreaded, had finally occurred."

— M. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London, 1996), pp. 145-6.

"The Catholic conspiracy, so long feared and so painfully imagined, had finally happened."

— Dr Tristram Hunt, *Civil War*, programme one, 7 January 2002, BBC2



Stig of the recycling centre

THE television event of the year, at least according to the *Mirror*, will be the Pride of Britain awards sponsored by the *Daily Moron*.

Its two-page puff for the awards last week included a tear-stained quote from GMTV muppet Fiona Phillips, one of the judges: "Being a panellist humbled me to my knees. We are so obsessed with materialism and the culture of fame that it's very heartening we have an awards ceremony like this to redress the balance."

Stirring, heartfelt words – even if this distaste for the "culture of fame" sounds rather odd coming from the woman who presented the dire celeb-fest *OK!TV* ("I can't imagine a show I would rather watch," she gushed at the time), and who collected a hefty fee from *Hello!* for a cover-story featuring Fiona and hubby Martin Frizell relaxing at their "romantic getaway in France".

The comments on "materialism" – from someone who earns £260,000 a year for sitting on a sofa with Eamonn Holmes – are even more surprising. Can this be the same Fiona Phillips who collects handsome fees even for "charity appearances"?

The story of her charidee earnings broke last January, when the *Sunday People* revealed that Fiona had charged £7,500 for backing a BT scheme in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care, the National Meningitis Trust and the Stroke Association. She also charged £2,000 to promote the National Kidney Research Fund and earned £4,500 from the Lions' Club for just two hours' work promoting their National Sight Day – even though she was asked because her father suffered from glaucoma. The *Daily Mail* then discovered she had taken £4,000 for an afternoon's work for one of her "favourite charities", Baby Lifeline.

When a *People* hack rang her agent, Nicola Ibison, posing as a representative of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, he was quoted £10,000 as Fiona's fee for spending a day visiting NSPCC homes. "For that," Ibison added enticingly, "she'll do her best to give you a plug on air."

According to the *Mirror* last week, Fiona Phillips and her fellow Pride of Britain judges "shook their heads in disbelief as they read about children whose bravery made their hearts soar, teachers who had dedicated their lives to turning around poorly performing schools and emergency workers who went beyond the call of duty." It must have seemed incredible indeed: don't these "everyday heroes" have agents who can negotiate a proper fee for their good works?

7.30 FAT CLUB New series following the progress of 10 dieters as they attend the first Fat Club weekend. *(T) (Widescreen)* 81

Sunday Express magazine

AD NAUSEAM

EVERYTHING must go in adland – and that doesn't just apply to forlorn execs trying to find the Clerkenwell jobcentre or failed senior management being replaced with cheaper tyros.

When the money runs out it's common practice that an agency will dispense with all the chimps who've been hanging around for years and replace them with some good-looking birds. Which is exactly what they've done on the hallowed PG Tips account at agency BMP DDB.

After 45 years the nation's most enduring primates, who've had all England either tittering or yawning at their crazy overdubbed antics, have been axed. Their replacement comes in the form of Aardman Animations' plasticine birds who began their first spot midway through *Coronation Street* last Monday, moving into a dingy flat. From this we may gather that they're here to stay, especially as Aardman, creators of Wallace and Gromit and last year's *Chicken Run*, aren't cheap and don't do one-offs.

Apparently the T-Birds, as they are to be known, will follow storylines based on the diaries of real-life twentysomethings, all hinging on "PG moments", where they sit down, have a brew and everything's all right again. "PG Tips needed something with a lot more mileage than a family, which is becoming less the norm," said BMP creative director John Webster.

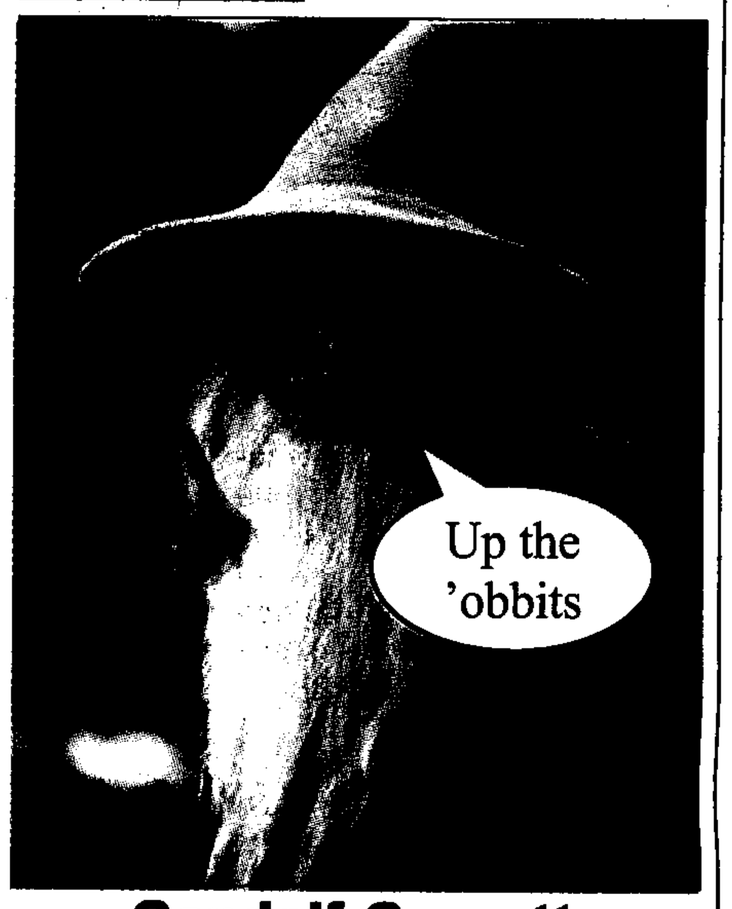
Not according to Oxo cubes, however, where the family is now once more the norm. Having maintained for the best part of two decades that any smouldering domestic could be solved with a pot-roast and a wry smile from Dad, Lynda Bellingham and Co were finally given the heave-ho in early 2001 for much the same reason as the PG chimps: market research was insistent that families don't sit around being familiar any more. There was also the matter that Oxo marketeers thought young Alison looked like she'd had one pot-roast too many.

Now, however, the Oxo family is back, rejuvenated and resplendent in Ikea'd finery in a new spot through Abbott Mead Vickers. Hapless nu-dad is discovered with a picture of Baby Spice in his wallet, and much hilarity ensues as his cheeky scamp kiddoes give him a grilling. The climax of the piece is "Daddy, who do you think's got a nicer bottom: mum or Baby Spice?" No surprise to discover that such inimitable quippery hails from *Notting Hill* auteur Richard Curtis who, in conjunction with AMV's creative C-in-C Peter Souter, came up with the brilliant idea of doing what someone else had done before, but worse. If the family wasn't dead before, it is now.

Which only leaves our friends the Tetley teafolk, complete with friendly Yorkshire vicar and feckless goon with pancake on head. And alas they too, appear to have drunk their last cuppa: agency D'Arcy has been briefed to come up with a replacement. Ad Nauseam has been told – on the sly - that there is a family of well-trained tea-drinking chimps who'd be perfect for the job.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Gandalf Garnett

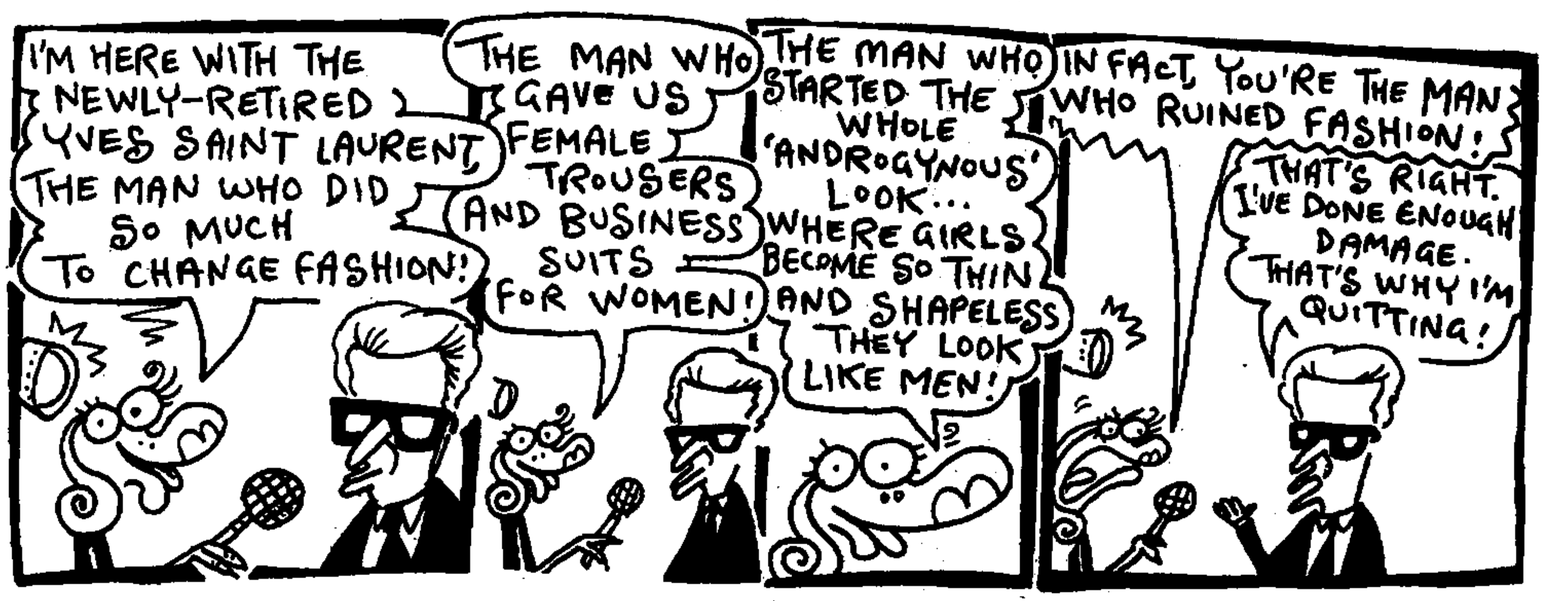
WORLD OF HYPE

MOST tasteless press release of the year so far award goes to London-based PR man Peter Noble for his promotion of a new computer game Rock Manager.

Noble links the game, in which the player aims to develop a successful music band, to the recent deaths of three rock musicians, all believed to be suicides. After naming the men in question (Jon Lee of Feeder, Zac Foley of EMF and Stuart Adamson of Big Country) Noble burbles: "Life goes on and some even say rock'n'roll never dies. How weird is that? It's no surprise that the recent rock suicides serve as an ironic twist leading up to the much hyped computer game release entitled Rock Manager."

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


I'M HERE WITH THE NEWLY-RETIRED YVES SAINT LAURENT, THE MAN WHO DID SO MUCH TO CHANGE FASHION!
THE MAN WHO GAVE US FEMALE TROUSERS AND BUSINESS SUITS FOR WOMEN!
THE MAN WHO STARTED THE WHOLE 'ANDROGYNOUS' LOOK... WHERE GIRLS BECOME SO THIN AND SHAPELESS THEY LOOK LIKE MEN!
IN FACT, YOU'RE THE MAN WHO RUINED FASHION!
THAT'S RIGHT. I'VE DONE ENOUGH DAMAGE. THAT'S WHY I'M QUITTING!

DOING THE ROUNDS

AND finally... Ten years after M.D. berated heart surgeons for "refusing to publish their figures in a manner comparable to other units", and two years after suggesting it to the Bristol public inquiry, health secretary Alan Milburn has announced that comparative figures for surgeons will be published. But not until 2004. And only death rates up to 30 days. And only adult heart surgeons — although we're working on the rest. Still, it's progress of a sort.

There are legitimate concerns for surgeons and patients, not least the accuracy of the information put on show. The government's previous performance league tables and those farmed out to private company Doctor Foster both fell woefully short of the standards required for fair comparison. Now individual surgeons and their teams are up for scrutiny, it's vital the government gets it right or even more of the NHS budget will be frittered away in the courts.

But good quality information costs, and the government's 198-page response to the inquiry, *Learning from Bristol*, gives no breakdown of costs at all. Audit information needs to be collected peripherally and analysed centrally by an organisation independent of both the NHS and the department of health. But at present far too much is done by the surgeons themselves, for no money at midnight on the back of an envelope.

As M.D. has repeatedly stressed in this column, audit is a largely meaningless venture unless it is against an agreed standard. What matters is not whether your surgeon is first or 17th in the league table (there will be large variations each year by chance alone) but whether he has achieved a defined minimum standard and, if not, a swift no blame investigation has taken place to establish why not. The fact that neither the department of health nor the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons has been able to define a standard benchmark for even the common adult heart surgery operations, despite years of collecting confidential data, shows we are light years from true accountability.

This is most clearly demonstrated by Milburn's failure to come up with the list of questions parents should ask before allowing their children to have heart surgery. Having promised these on 18 July, he's clearly realised that he doesn't have the answers. Brave patients and parents are already asking for written estimates of "What are the chances of death within 30 days?" and "What are the chances of brain damage?"; but without publication there is no check on the accuracy of the information given. Roll on 2004.

In Bristol, now one of the most successful units in the UK, audit is published and patients are tracked for far longer than 30 days after operation. As Professor Gianni Angelini puts it: "What's the point of surviving heart surgery if you can't get out of the house with angina a year later?" So his unit collects data on all patients annually. If Bristol can do it now, why not everyone else?

As for independent scrutiny, the government is still maintaining that the Commission for Health Improvement fits the bill, despite setting it up, housing it and giving it its remit. A true mark of independence would be some public statement about whether it has the resources to cope with the huge amount of extra work the department of health is sending its way.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE media were quick to report the government's claim that Britain was now officially foot-and-mouth free, three months after the last officially admitted case of FMD on 30 September. What they did not seem so quick to ask was why, on 30 September, DEFRA was reporting the total number of animals killed as 3,905,000 yet, just before announcing that Britain was FMD-free, it was giving the figure as 4,063,000.

Why it should have been necessary to kill another 158,000 animals during a period when officially the disease had been eradicated is just another of those mysteries which continue to mount up around one of the greatest government cock-ups on record.

At least animal rights activists in Wales have unwittingly helped to highlight another mystery of this sorry story. The Wales Alliance Against Cruel Sports has instructed its members, as the lambing season gets under way, to tramp the Welsh hills searching out any lambs which look poorly. If they think the case seems sufficiently serious, they are instructed to take the animal to a vet and send the bill to one of the Welsh farming unions.

Not surprisingly the unions have pointed out that to take lambs away from their ewes in this way could be an act of considerable cruelty both to the lambs and their mothers, which might well develop mastitis from not having a lamb to take their milk. Quite apart from which it would be an act of theft. Not that this would bother the animal rights fanatics. But it may remind us of one of the odder features of last year's mass slaughter: namely the extraordinary silence of the animal rights brigade during those months when one in eight of all the farm animals in Britain were being killed, many in conditions of horrendous cruelty.

From every affected part of the country stories poured in of animals being killed by Maffia teams in flagrant breach of animal welfare laws. Lambs had their brains beaten out against stone walls, piglets were smashed to death with shovels as they were born, men in overalls were charging round fields blazing away at cattle with shotguns. Every day, for many weeks, the number of criminal breaches of the 1994 animal welfare regulations probably ran into thousands. Yet, faced with the most blatant act of mass-cruelty to animals this country has ever seen, the serried ranks of bunnyhuggers, anti-vivisection campaigners and battle-scarred veterans of the protests against cramming lambs into cross-Channel ferries – not to mention those hundreds of MPs clamouring for an end to the barbarous practice of hunting with dogs – uttered not a murmur of protest.

After several months of this government-sponsored savagery, the RSPCA at last took desultory interest in what was going on, even at one point claiming that it was "investigating 60 cases of reported cruelty". But the only case which ever looked like a serious runner, following a threatened private prosecution, was the slaughterman filmed in Monmouthshire taking pot shots at sheep. The RSPCA reluctantly agreed to take over the prosecution but, just before it reached court, our leading champions of animal welfare decided to drop the case.

'Muckspreader'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Strategy what strategy?

THE strategic rail authority's army of penpushers spent years developing the SRA's recently published "strategy". But it was nothing of the sort: just another list of projects in the pipeline.

Hence rolling-stock orders "announced" repeatedly since 1997 were announced again. And the Thameslink 2000 scheme, first trumpeted in the 1980s, became a highlight of the so-called strategy. The "strategy" was also reported as a £67bn plan; but the majority is subsidy for services and expenditure on routine matters like training staff and renewing the neglected fabric of stations, tracks and signals.

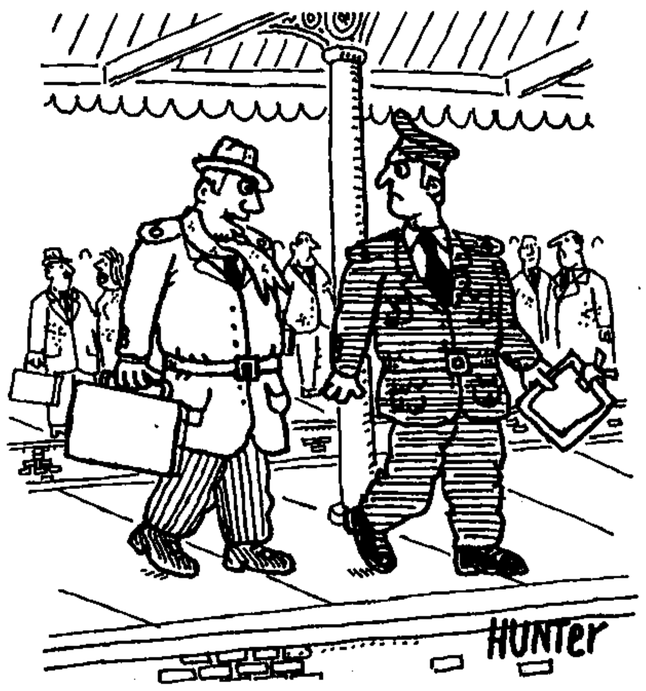
The delay of about 18 months to the "strategy" was long enough for the SRA to decide in principle on large projects such as the north-south high-speed line, the London Crossrail scheme, a track to Heathrow from the south and upgrading of the Great Western mainline. But it did not decide these issues. These projects would have a big knock-on effect on other services, infrastructure and rolling stock, but nobody can begin to factor them into their plans until they become firm commitments. Since nobody in the SRA or government has the will to make firm commitments, these major schemes remain in limbo.

● THE plan for an east-west bypass of London has far-reaching strategic potential, but as the SRA doesn't understand what strategy is, it was no surprise the idea was rejected last summer after the SRA had sat on it for two years and gradually whittled it down to nothing useful.

By that time a consortium of nearly 40 local and port authorities and businesses had spent six years on development and appointed a construction company willing to take the risk on the building work.

The east-west rail scheme needs just nine miles of former railway line reinstated to open up masses of new journey opportunities. A 90mph train service would directly connect places such as Oxford to Cambridge, Bedford to Ipswich and Bristol to Norwich. It would provide a useful link between all the mainlines north and due west of London.

Much of the £240m price tag was for beefing up existing lines and therefore not wholly attributable to the scheme. Another portion consisted of Railtrack plc's exaggerated costs and fat profit margin. Freight trains would use the new route to avoid congested lines in the London area, greatly helping to make the scheme viable. But the SRA told the consortium not to include freight because the scheme was being assessed by the SRA's passenger officers, not its freight division. Its failure to marry the two betrays a strategic gulf even within the SRA.



"Excuse me – is the non-arrival of the 8.15 due to strike action or the return of normal service?"

The scheme's greatest strategic benefit would accrue to London. Many passengers now passing through the capital could divert to the east-west line instead of heaving their luggage through the underground system (which is closed to many disabled people). Trains would be a little less overcrowded and the need for expensive investment in extra rail capacity in the London area would be reduced. The consortium didn't emphasise this benefit enough (probably because it is driven by local authorities to the north and west).

This is precisely where a genuinely strategic rail authority would make a difference, seeing the big picture and appreciating what this modest outlay could save for another region. If the consortium's bid didn't stack up, a real SRA would have led a reshaping of the scheme to make it work. Instead, the SRA's "strategy" totally ignores the east-west scheme, not even awarding it a place in the "in your dreams" section for beyond 2010.

● ANY relief South Central passengers may have felt when Connex was finally kicked out last year may be shortlived. The new franchise operator was forced to cut regulated fares this month to compensate commuters for pisspoor performance last year. South Central's response was to push up (unregulated) station car-park charges. At East Grinstead the fee rose by 56 percent. Not bad when the amount knocked off fares was just 1.4 percent, eh?

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

ISLAM-BETH WALK

THE discovery that Lambeth town hall hosted meetings of radical Islamists including Richard Reid, the alleged "shoe bomber", came as little surprise to veteran town hall staff. They still talk fondly of the days when "Loony Lambeth" played host to supporters of the Provisional IRA, Colonel Gadaffi and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

In addition to benefiting from the hospitality of the town hall, al-Qa'ida supporters have another reason to thank Lambeth. Although it has been reported that the address scribbled on the back of a weapons instruction manual found in a valley 60 miles north of Kandahar was that of a Lambeth council flat, 114 Chute House, what has not been made public is that Lambeth's housing anti-fraud team was engaged in an attempt to identify who really lived at 114 Chute House and other council properties when it was disbanded with 24 hours notice last July. Disbanded not because the team was failing in its work but because it was doing too well.

An investigation of a sample 7,000 tenancies had revealed that no fewer than 2,000 were potentially illegally occupied. So, with the borough owning some 36,000 properties, it was possible that up to 8,000 might not be occupied by the "tenants" in the council's books. Aghast at the time and money that would have to be spent sorting the problem out, councillors decided quietly to disband the anti-fraud team instead. Praise be to Allah!

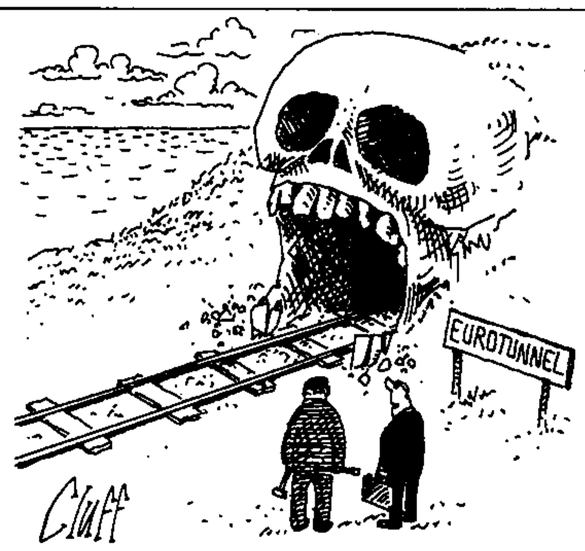
BUM RAP

ROTHERHAM council's standards board has shown its mettle by failing to recommend any action against former deputy leader Jim Wright. He had to be restrained by fellow councillors after allegedly attempting to punch a protester at a public meeting.

Rotherham's Labour leader Mark "Two Jobs" Edgell was defiant, declaring that "our standards board is a model which other authorities are seeking to adopt". Well, yes. Edgell himself was investigated after it was revealed that he had attended a local government conference in Bournemouth (see *Eye* 1006) while officially off sick from his other well-paid job at the DfES. The board decided to take no action against Edgell, nor against two other erring Labour councillors.

It has come down hard, however, on former Lib Dem councillor Barry Ross (now "leader" of the "John Lilburne party"; member: B. Ross) after he entered into a vituperative exchange of letters with the mayor, councillor Reg Littleboy (*sic*), who was informed that Ross had "cleansed his rectum" with a letter from his worshipful. The Littleboy lodged a formal complaint and Ross was summarily expelled from his committees. A model, and very grown-up, council indeed.

● THE Labour party's deft touch in disciplinary matters is on display again on Merseyside, where the party has lost control of Wirral council after attempts to gag independently-minded councillors backfired. Earlier this month Labour councillor Colin Dow quit the party to sit as an independent after he had faced a kangaroo court into bogus allegations that he had "bullied" other councillors without being given time to mount a proper defence. For "bullied" read "disagreed with the party line". Dow's defection turned a Labour majority of two over the Tories and Lib Dems into a 33-33 split. Happily there are no disciplinary problems for the council's former education chairman, and former member of The Spinners folk group, Mick Groves. Grooves has remained a member of the council, drawing £7,500 in allowances and propping up Labour control, despite that fact that since last year he has lived 200 miles away in Exeter.



"I don't think we'll have any more trouble from asylum-seekers now"

BASHING THE BISHOP

IN NOVEMBER we reported that Doncaster Labour councillor and former chief whip Danny Buckley had been found guilty of fiddling his expenses.

The judge had warned Buckley that he could face a prison sentence if he persisted in his transparently dishonest defence that the money he had fiddled had actually been stolen by a council officer. Buckley wisely backed down and was given 80 hours' community service. He continued to try it on, however, with a bid for legal aid. This got short shrift, it being pointed out he was actually in well-paid employment.

But who could possibly want to employ such a crook? Step forward the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (chair, the Rt Rev Alan Morgan, Bishop of Sherwood), the charitable trust set up by John Prescott in 1999 to breath life into run-down mining communities. As the £25,000 a year "regeneration manager" for the Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield area, the convicted fraudster helps decide how £100m of public and private money is distributed to various "community" projects. Ain't life grand?

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE revelation in a recent public accounts committee report that one in five adults and nearly one in 10 children are obese urgently increases the need for young people to take more exercise. Nevertheless the sale of playing fields continues.

In the middle of the Christmas break Varndean College in Brighton reactivated a planning application to sell three acres of playing fields on the edge of the Sussex Downs (see *Eye 1037*). The application to sell the land to developers to build 40 to 60 new homes was originally lodged on 24 July 2001, conveniently in the middle of the summer holidays, but was put on hold for several months. Unlike schools, further education colleges do not have to seek permission from the secretary of state before disposing of playing fields, even though in the case of Varndean the college shares a 60-acre campus with four schools.

The application is likely to go before Brighton and Hove council planning committee on 6 February. The college claims it needs to sell the land to raise £4-6m for building work to enable it to cope with a projected 900 extra students over the next 10 years. It has also tagged on a vote-winning proposal to build a new post-16 special needs unit as part of the redevelopment. Half the funds will come from the sale of land and half from the regional Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Opponents of the sale argue that so-called necessity has more to do with the high value of the land to property developers (around £1m per acre). Sport England, the sports development body, has objected strongly to the sale saying it does not comply with any of its conditions for the disposal of playing fields. But David Hawker, of the local education authority (LEA) which supports the plans, has written to the council's planning department urging it to disregard Sport England's opinion.

NB: In 1998 then education secretary David Blunkett pledged to put an end to the "environmental vandalism" of selling off playing fields.

NEWS of another triumph for the private finance initiative (PFI) comes from Sheffield, where hundreds of children from Tapton secondary school were sent home last week after the school's phone lines were cut because Sheffield council's private "partner" in running the school, Interserve, had neglected to pay the bill.

Life under Interserve — formerly the "construction giant" Tilbury Douglas — has been far from rosy. Tapton staff were angry when a dispute between Interserve and refuse collection operator Onyx resulted in a build up of rubbish on the pavement in front of the school; meanwhile the lunchtime meals service at both Tapton and another of Interserve's schools, King Edward, was so slow that pupils missed the first lesson of the afternoon. The £45m PFI contract runs for 25 years, and Sheffield's Lib Dems have agreed a similar scheme for a further two comprehensives. A bid for a third wave of rebuilding is being considered by ministers.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

WE WANT SOMETHING TO EXPRESS OUR GUT-WRENCHING AND INCONSOLABLE GRIEF
PAULA PRYKE BESPOKE FLOWERS
MY GOODNESS, YOU MUST BE SUFFERING A MASSIVE BEREAVEMENT. HAS SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU PASSED ON?
NO, THEY'VE MOVED ON: FROM NORTH LONDON TO NORFOLK
PAULA PRYKE BESPOKE FLOWERS
SOB

O·B·N

The Dior fashion designer John Galliano collected a CBE from the Queen yesterday and praised her dress sense.

"I think she's sublime," he said. "She has created a style of her own – so has the Queen Mother. I have fantasised about designing for them both, but I don't think I could take that job on."

JOHN GALLIANO
Daily Telegraph

Nominated by Francis Harvey.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

NOOKS and CORNERS

LAST month the London Borough of Islington — whose planning officers would normally agonise for months over an application to add a conservatory to the back of a house — gave planning permission to a massive three-part £400m development in Highbury which will have a devastating impact on the immediate area.

At the single meeting to discuss the three schemes, the Liberal Democrat majority of councillors allowed objectors just three minutes each before giving Arsenal Football Club what it wanted. At least Stephen Byers, secretary of state, has asked for more time to decide whether all this should be called in for public inquiry – as it should be.

While the tall ugly bulk of the present Arsenal stadium overshadows a coherent area of standard London terraced houses, the management already does its best to interfere with the lives of local residents. After all, in addition to the culturally-sanctioned mayhem and brute noise of weekend matches, there are now evening events to incapacitate the tube stations and fill the neighbouring streets with cars.

When residents dared challenge the arrogant imperatives of football in trying to make the 38,000-seat Highbury stadium even taller and uglier, Arsenal FC decided to build an even bigger new 60,000-seat stadium nearby, designed by something called HOK Sport, on land between the two railway lines south of Finsbury Park. This involves replacing the cleansing depot on that site with a new waste and recycling plant designed by Sheppard Robson a little further south. To pay for all this, blocks of flats by CWZG are to be built along Lough Road and the new stadium is to be surrounded by the "Space City" housing development, also by CZWG. Meanwhile the existing stadium will be partly converted and partly replaced by blocks of flats by Allies & Morrison.

Oddly enough local people (and the University of North London) are unimpressed. They point out that two of the sites crucial in this interrelated development — the present depot and the new site in Lough Road — are owned by the London Borough of Islington, so the council has a vested interest and can scarcely be impartial as a planning authority. They also complain that the existing transport — mainly the Piccadilly Line — will be unable to cope with the huge numbers the new stadium can attract, and that residential streets will become hopelessly clogged with cars. But they can now look forward to six years of noise and lorry movements in residential streets as Railtrack has decided the adjacent railway cannot be used to shift spoil or building materials.

The main objection is to the very heavy density of the development. Most of the housing is in blocks of flats, many of them seven storeys high. Tall blocks are proposed for the existing stadium as the listed stands are being retained and converted into housing. When two of the undistinguished but large Arsenal stands were listed — as a pathetic sop to proletarian "culture" — the football club was outraged; now it is pleased their retention allows tall structures to be built on the sites of the other two stands whereas a development built from scratch would never be tolerated at this scale.

In all, on the three sites some 2,000 homes are proposed. Of these, 22 percent will be "affordable housing" — mostly flats with one or two bedrooms. The real need in the area is for family housing, while the Greater London Authority's policy for such large developments is to demand 50 percent affordable housing. Yet Mayor Ken Livingstone has given his blessing: "Red" Ken wouldn't want to oppose the vital interests of a pseudo-working class sport, now would he?

To achieve Arsenal's vision a number of businesses in Drayton Park have to be evicted or extinguished. Normally compulsory purchase powers are only used in the public interest and not on behalf of a private developer. Is it really in the public interest to have a larger football stadium in this part of north London? The truth is that Arsenal FC is really nothing more than a property developer, and a greedy and insensitive one at that. Yet local politicians do what it wants.

When thwarted, Arsenal regularly uses the ploy of threatening to leave the borough even though it has nowhere else to go. Well so what? Its bluff should be called.

The grant of planning permission to the Arsenal development is a scandal: it is too large and much too dense, while the public interest is scarcely served by a larger stadium to make Arsenal FC yet more money. Once upon a time, for those unfortunate enough to live nearby, football — with its attendant violence, vomit and intimidating, fascist baying — was a nightmare to be endured on Saturday afternoons for half the year. Now, more and more, the disruption is on weekday evenings as well while football stadia are increasingly used for pop concerts too.

However, fawning middle-class inverted snobs and posturing politicians rarely dare question the smug bogus populism of organised football. In fact, as we now know, more people now visit art galleries and museums than attend football matches. Football merely serves television, that is, Rupert Murdoch.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

You'll soon be seeing a radical change in my work. Out with last year's stale old ideas, in with something new, unexpected and very provocative!
HOXTON SQUARE
Brilliant, Sophie! What'll it be?
I don't know yet— Saatchi hasn't told me.

I-SPY *Czech Republic*

Submitted by Saul Metzstein.

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

ASYLUM NEWS

REFUGEES from Zimbabwe who have been seeking asylum in Britain have been falling prey to unscrupulous lawyers and immigration advisers. The Zimbabwe Association has lodged a dossier of complaint about one London-based adviser, Jacob Moyo, with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), the official watchdog.

The association alleges that Moyo, a Zimbabwean, charges substantial sums – often several hundred pounds – for services he does not always deliver; and that Zimbabweans have been removed to a "very uncertain future as a result of appalling representation from Mr Moyo". It is alleged that he fails to tell his clients about the availability of legal aid (they usually rely on impoverished family and friends to raise his fees); that he does not always visit detainees to take proper instructions; he does not always turn up or is late for clients' home office interviews; and that statements and evidence are often not prepared or submitted.

In one case an asylum seeker paid Moyo £800 but found that in a statement prepared on his behalf he was referred to as a woman. He says Mr Moyo did not visit him once to take proper instructions or go through a statement. He lost his appeal, but a reputable solicitors' firm rescued his case and is now taking it to the high court.

In another case it is alleged that a Zimbabwean held in detention for many months paid £400 only to find that no statement was ever taken from him and that evidence he had collected in support of his case was not presented at his hearing. He too lost his claim. One detainee who had left his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition membership card with Mr Moyo, which was then not presented in evidence, said in a statement: "Mr Moyo won't say anything to you unless you pay him first. Once you have paid him you are stuck with him even if you are not happy with his advice."

Mr Moyo strenuously denies all the allegations, claiming they are part of a campaign to discredit him. "These are scandalous claims," he said. "I do not have a single letter of complaint. I have a very good reputation – that is why I have so many clients. I handle an average of 10 to 12 cases per week."

He maintains he always tells clients about legal aid, but they choose to pay him because of his good name. "Some of them do go to legal aid lawyers but then they come running back to me because their cases are badly handled. I always see clients. I do a lot of preparation preparing witnesses statements and getting evidence."

JUST FANCY THAT!

Sun, page 1, Wednesday January 16
'SUN GETS PERV LAW CHANGED'
Home Secretary David Blunkett last night ordered new laws to ban perverts who entice young girls to strip.

Sun, page 3, every other day
Young girls are enticed to strip by David Yelland

"I've got to get to a hospital"

EYE TOLD YOU SO

THE spiralling costs of Lord Saville's inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday, now standing at £52m, were the subject of two recent heated parliamentary debates. But the *Eye* has long warned of the massive amount being pocketed in fees by the lawyers working on the case.

As early as October 1999 when the costs stood at £11m, the *Eye* described the inquiry as "one of the most successful wealth-creation schemes in Northern Ireland" (988). By February 2000 the eventual bill was estimated at £30m (far short of the current projected total of £100m), but the *Eye* reported that the legal teams were still not content with their level of remuneration (995).

While senior briefs were earning £200 an hour, juniors were upset to be on only £100 an hour and were seeking a judicial review to raise their fees to an eminently more reasonable £134 an hour.

In March of that year Slicker revealed that John Tate, the Fat Controller of Maxwell fame now with the Serious Farce Office, had contributed to the escalating costs with expensive trips to the Middle East and Australia to interview witnesses (999). By August 2000 the prospect of various judicial reviews connected to the inquiry meant that the final figure of £100m was mentioned for the first time (1008).

By July 2001 a rather worrying prospect had arisen. With several lawyers either withdrawing from the case or absent for long periods (Michael "the haircut" Mansfield QC for one) and the judges' report unlikely to surface until after 2004, it became possible that the relatives of the dead, the soldiers, or both, would seek a judicial review to block the findings being published, arguing that their human rights had been infringed under the European convention by the numerous changes of personnel. In the very worst case scenario this could lead to the whole case having to start over again and £100m of taxpayers' money being poured down the drain.

"More HRT, Vicar?"

Letters

Private Eye

Extra dry Sherrin

Sir,

If the government finally decides to launch a full public inquiry into foot-and-mouth, for which Private Eye has been banging the drum, will your organ then begin whinging about costs of the said inquiry a couple of years down the line as you do fortnightly about the cost of the Bloody Sunday inquiry? Or are dead sheep more important than dead Catholics?

Kind regards,
JUDE SHERRIN,

Via email.

Lynde House latest

Sir,

As past and present relatives of patients in Lynde House we must challenge the assertion from Jonathan Street, PR for Westminster Healthcare, that the home has been subject to very few complaints.

There are well over 20 documented cases of serious abuse or neglect of the very frail and elderly. The complaints are on-going and have increased over the past four years. Nothing has been done by Westminster Healthcare to recognise or rectify the concerns that have been brought to its attention.

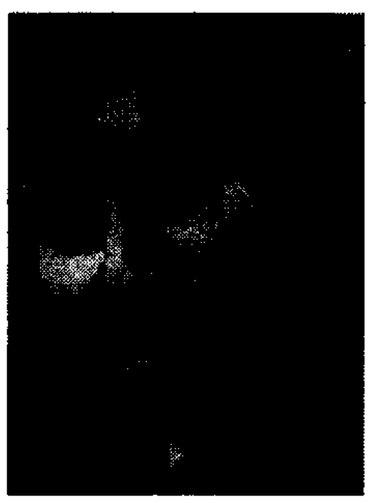
Such is the seriousness and weight of evidence that the Kingston and Richmond Health Authority has been forced to appoint an independent inspector to investigate all the concerns raised. This report is due to be made public, when completed.

Sincerely,
G. WARD AND E. CLEAVER,

Via email.

Lookalike

Letwin



Colombo

Sir,

Is the Independent on Saturday trying to kid us? Shouldn't the headline read "The famous dishevelled detective, Lieutenant Colombo..." Or is he under cover? "Oliver Letwin" – I don't believe it, sounds like a made-up name to me.

Yours,
VALERIE HILL,

Stroud, Glos.

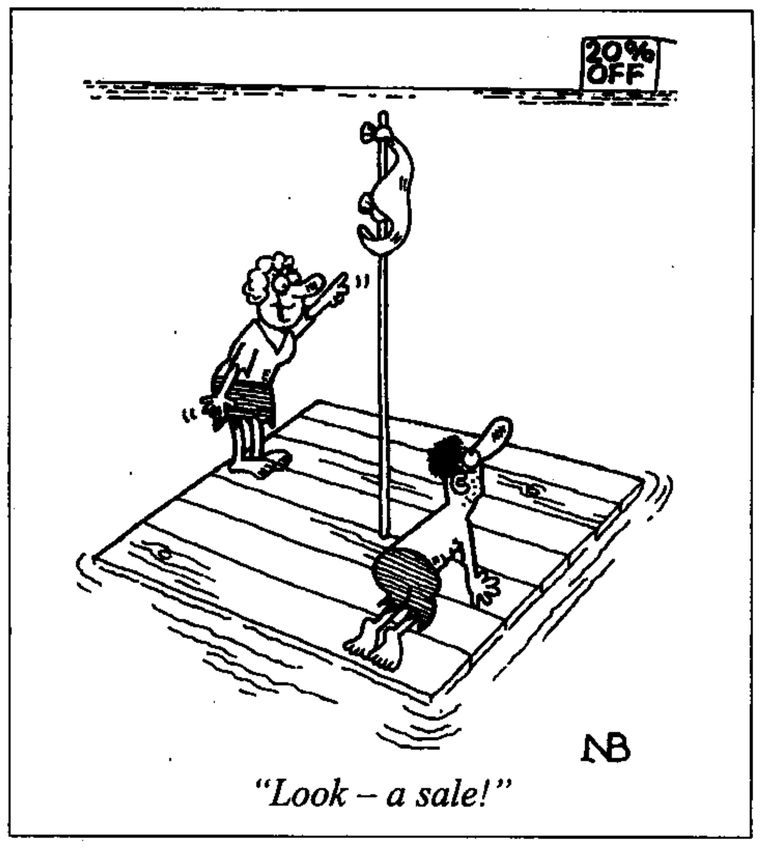
What a Witts

Sir,

Your correspondent (Letters, 1045) is mistaken. I've never been on the staff of the Arts Council, except sexually. Also I didn't include all those irrelevant facts he cites because I didn't want to send you a letter as dull as his. However, I fear I have now.

Cheers,
RICHARD WITTS,

Brighton.



"Look – a sale!"

Ice picky

Sir,

His presentation of what purported to be a review of "Shackleton" (Eye 1045) indicates that "Square Eyes" is unaware of the purpose of historical drama. Astonishingly enough, it is about telling a story and must be judged on how well and accurately it does this, not on the extent to which it comments on current events.

God help us if everything we see is to bear a political message, as "Square Eyes" thinks it should. It is preposterous to claim, as he does, that in the earlier programme "The Last Place on Earth" Griffiths "used a historical story to goad and criticise the politicians of the day". Griffiths attacked the Scott myth, no more. To see that programme as an attack (with an ice-pick, no less) on Thatcher is so absurd that only an intellectual could believe it.

"Square Eyes" really shows his inadequacy when it comes to his silly comments on Branagh's voice. Why should he have sounded "Edwardian" (whatever that might mean)? At the time of the story Edward had been dead for some time and George V was on the throne. I agree that Branagh's voice was not Shackleton's. Shackleton was Anglo-Irish, born 30 miles from Dublin, and spoke with a brogue which can be clearly heard in the various sound recordings he made, which "Square Eyes" has obviously never heard.

As to the "lumbering historical irony" of men underestimating the probable length of the First World War, this is simple reality, as any fule kno. Millions enlisted because they didn't want to miss it. Irony was not involved.

CLIVE A BLAKE,

Wolfhill, Perthshire.

C4 so good

Sir,

I feel I must write in defence of Channel 4 with reference to Square Eyes' assertion (Eye 1044) that it "seemed to be switching sides... morphing into a combination of Channel 5... and the Virgin Group". If anything, I contend that the change is more in the direction of BBC2's perceived role in providing a mixture of entertainment and education, especially in the field of documentary making.

Speaking as a humble, semi-retired school-teacher, I have been delighted at much of Channel 4's adult history programming during 2001, building on previous successes such as "Time Team" and "Secrets of the Dead". In particular, the recent series on the 17th century was excellent, with the "Plague" episode a true classic – and a brave move at "feature length". Hopefully, the ambitious "Shackleton" will continue this trend into 2002.

Whoever is responsible deserves great credit!

Best wishes,
MALCOLM COLLINS (M.A.),

Bradford, West Yorks.

Oath of allegiance

Sir,

Glad to see that HP Sauce (11 Jan 2002) points out that immigrants already have to swear an oath of allegiance to become a naturalized British citizen. However, the date given for the start of this practice and the act of parliament in 1981 that introduced it must be wrong.

I have a copy of my mother's "certificate of naturalization granted to a minor" dated 15 October 1947 on which her signature is witnessed by a justice of the peace and states: "I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George VI, His Heirs and Successors, according to law".

NIGEL SWEET,

Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex.

Scenes You Seldom See (2)

"Thank you – I'll take six"

Another pedant writes

Sir,

Please note that the discovery of DNA mentioned by Kieran Balhetchet (Letters, 11 January) did not revolutionise 19th century science because no one knew what it did. Its role in genetics was found by Avery in 1944 and explained by Crick and Watson's observation that the sequence in one strand of the double helix specified the other, so that separating the strands allowed reproduction.

Even more pedantically,
JOHN JENKINS,

Via email.

Shifting the blame

Sir,

Thanks for including me in Pseud's Corner [Buffy The Vampire Slayer and Western Patriarchy], but, alas, the credit for upsetting yet another bunch of ex-public schoolboys must go to my editor, Roz, rather than to me. Anyone interested in the unedited essay is welcome to contact me.

ZOE-JANE PLAYDON,

University of London.

Stern response

Sir,

Your report of Peter Mandelson's boasts to a Balfour Day dinner in Jerusalem (HP Sauce, Eye 1044) does not say whether they were greeted with astonishment or hilarity.

If Mandelson's grandfather Herbert Morrison smuggled in "weapons for the Stern Gang" in 1935 he must have had remarkable prescience. Abraham Stern did not form his breakaway terror group, known as Lehi, until 1940. Incidentally, although Lehi did kill British soldiers of course, it was the larger Irgun Zvai Leumi, led by Menachem Begin, which blew up British headquarters at the King David Hotel in 1946, killing numerous civilians.

By then Mr Morrison was home secretary in the Labour government. While he didn't want Europe's Jewish refugees coming to Britain, his hitherto also pro-Zionist colleague Ernest Bevin was trying to keep them out of Palestine. Had Morrison's "Zionist sympathies" extended to backing the "Stern Gang" that really would necessitate a rewriting of history!

But I expect Mr Mandelson's Jerusalem audience forgave him the excessive enthusiasm of a recent convert to Zionism. "Last refuge" and all that. Incidentally, Mr Begin's record of killing British soldiers (and Palestinian civilians) did not hinder his friendly reception by Mrs Thatcher's government, any more than arms buyers were unwelcome from regimes which would kill British soldiers later. We must keep everything in perspective.

CHARLES POTTINS,

Via email.

LUVVIES

"I'm a great fan of hers, but I haven't read any of her books. I just don't have the time."

KATE WINSLET on Iris Murdoch
The Daily Telegraph

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Hear, hear

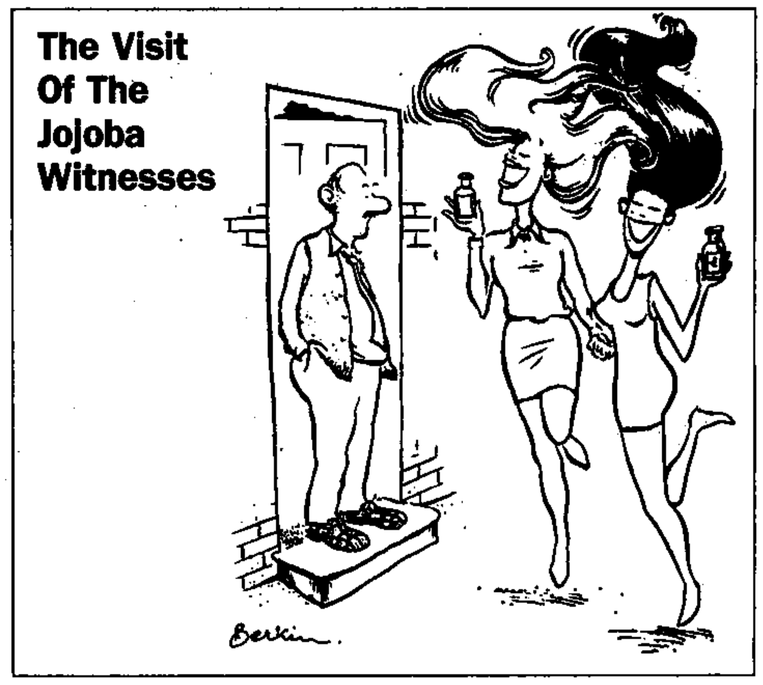
Sir,

Piloti got most things right about the Forum in Norwich except that it cannot be used as a concert hall as the acoustics are crap. In this respect it is similar to the redundant churches.

The City Hall is the only building that is as ugly and out of scale with the rest of the city centre as the Forum. Fortunately these two buildings are next to each other so their influence is limited. Unfortunately they dominate the West of the Market.

Yours looking Eastward to
Gentlemen's Walk.
DAVID ATKINSON,

Norwich.



Dumb di-dum

Sir,

As your readership guffaws at the stupidity of the nation and now even it's [sic] quiz researchers (Dumb Britain, Eye 1045), could I point out to the contributor responsible that the question asked on the Paul Ross quiz "No Win, No Fee" was slightly different to that referred to in this sniffily condescending feature. Ross asked who the next elected president was after Nixon. The show's answer, Jimmy Carter, was therefore correct.

Yours,
FELIX WEST,

Via email.

Wisdom after the event

Sir,

Your feature "How Europe Read the Historic News" (Eye 1045) could have been amusing if it weren't for the shocking errors it contained. Appearing alongside two of Europe's most illustrious rags was the "Berliner Tageblat" (sic), which, even it were a currently existing newspaper (which I'm afraid it isn't), would in fact be spelled "Tagesblatt".

As if that weren't enough, "Brussels Sprouts" in the same issue completely mistranslated "Wissenschaft" as "wisdom", instead of "science". It's little wonder that Britain is sidelined in Europe when even its elite display such appalling ignorance. Perhaps you'd all have been better off learning modern languages at your local comp than wasting your time with Latin and Greek at public school.

Auf Wiedersehen,
DANIEL BELL,

Berlin.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It's been mine and Roy Evans's job to really hold the baby and keep the ship afloat until the new board comes on board and we can get a course to which to steer to..."
PETER ROE, Radio 5 Live
(Dennis Wheatley)

"... and the silence grew deeper and even louder..."
Commentator, Eurosport
(David Morgan)

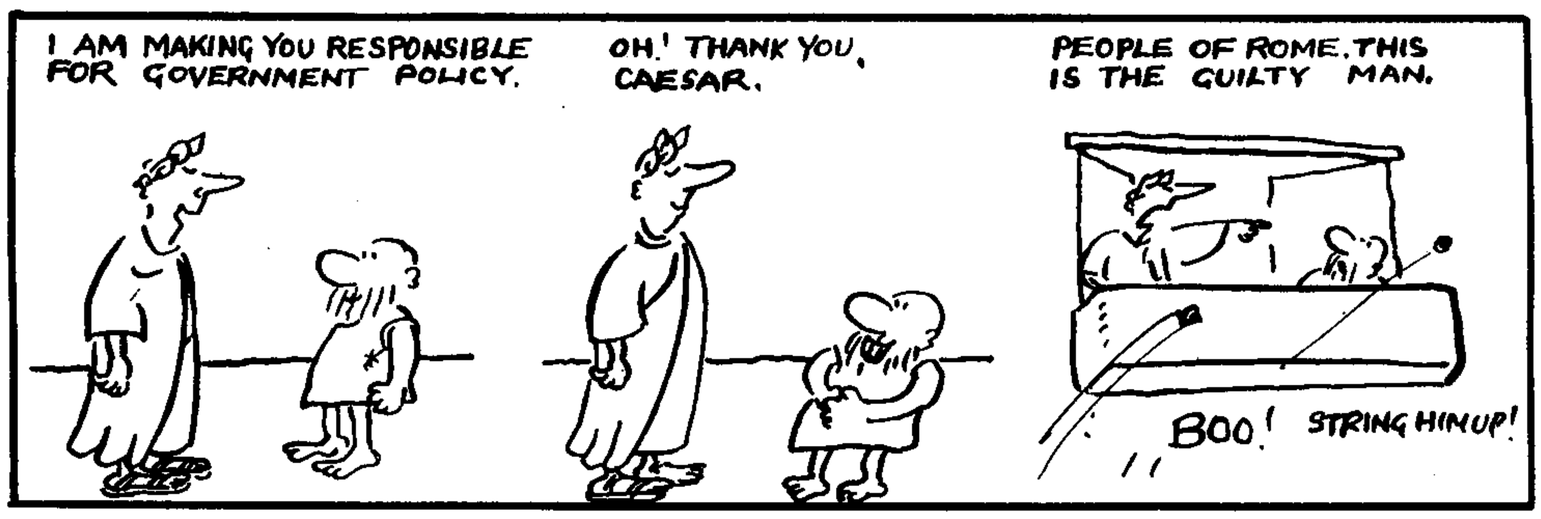
"One thing we know for certain is that if he [Osama bin Laden] is not in Afghanistan, he is in another country or he is dead."
DONALD RUMSFELD, ITN News
(Alan McNeil)

"Most motorists use roads rather than the Underground or railways..."
STEPHEN BYERS, Radio 5 Live
(Ed Watkinson)

"If you make the right decision, it's normally going to be the correct one."
DAVE BEASANT, Radio 5 Live
(Nigel Baldwin)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN


I AM MAKING YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY.
OH! THANK YOU, CAESAR.
PEOPLE OF ROME. THIS IS THE GUILTY MAN.
BOO! STRING HIM UP!

Letter from **Tehran**
from Our Own Correspondent

IRANIANS just aren't getting the message. They seem to think democracy has something to do with giving the electorate what it wants, as opposed to what it should have.

Bagh-e-Melli Gate

Just because that fellow Khatami returned to the presidency last year with a mere 21.6m votes, his so-called "reformist" friends (who fooled the public into giving them the Majlis, our parliament, the year before) apparently believe they have the right to throw their weight about. But we from the old school have ways of keeping them busy with things other than the "reforms" they claim to want.

As usual our friends in the courts have been extremely useful. There's no end to the number of troublemakers we've managed to put away – journalists, writers, lawyers, politicos, you name it. Not to mention closing down most of their subversive periodicals, which serve as fifth-column bases for our foreign foes.

The trick is to make the charges and sentences so outrageous that Khatami and Co are obliged to drop everything and try to sort it out. And then because they can't do anything – the judiciary is, thank Allah, "independent" – we can make them look weak and feckless. All they can do is bleat.

Of course we know the people we've put behind bars don't amount to much of a threat. To rub the message home more strongly, we've started to go for bigger fish as well. Some of these pesky MPs who've made a fuss about the arrests and prosecutions, for example: we decided to teach them who's boss by taking them to court too for criticising the way the courts work. At least they can speak from personal experience now!

We managed to get sentences for three of them; and one, Hossein Loghmanian, was actually arrested and put in jail. Unfortunately his friends in the Majlis kicked up such a hullabaloo the speaker walked out and the supreme leader (who normally does what we want) had to intervene to pardon Loghmanian, otherwise it might have got too embarrassing. Never mind. We have plenty more tricks up our clerical sleeves.

We've also got our eye on Bijan Zanganeh, Khatami's oil minister, and Central Bank chief Mohsen Nourbakhsh. We might be able to get them put away on trumped-up corruption charges. They're much more dangerous because they're pretty efficient and serious, and could get the economy moving, which would be good for Khatami and therefore bad for us.

That's why we've also encouraged our other reliable friends in the "Council of Guardians" to keep spiking a new law which would safeguard the foreign investment we need if we're to create jobs for the hundreds of thousands of youngsters coming on to the market each year. Among other things, the council has the right to vet legislation and it's doing a grand job blocking the "reformists".

The Guardians have also ruled that parliamentary immunity is not Islamic, even though it is enshrined in the constitution. So it may be open season on those turbulent MPs unless they pipe down. They did a splendid job in November too, when we held a by-election to replace the seven MPs from Golestan province killed when their plane crashed. The Guardians have the job of vetting candidates, and they weeded out practically all the reformists. Unfortunately some slipped through the net. But we'll get them next time.

All we have to do is keep this up for another year or two, when elections come around again. With any luck by then the public will be so fed up with their empty promises they'll throw them out. Then it'll be our turn again.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"In hospitals, it is very important for physicians to know if a postoperative patient has been farting," Professor Hideo Ueda explained to reporters in the department of Anaesthesiology at Osaka Railway Hospital. "When a patient is coming out from under total anaesthesia, farting is an indication that the digestive tract is returning to normal, so I'm sure that the invention of the world's first fart detector will be a major contribution to medical science."

Professor Ueda was demonstrating the Hohi Kenshutsuki, a device developed by Osaka-based Mitreben Laboratories. "After major surgery, patients are still in a groggy state, so they often insist that their bowels have not begun to move, even when they have. That is what led to the invention of this device. The main ingredients of a human fart are nitrogen, carbon dioxide, methane,and hydrogen, and the Hohi Kenshutsuki can detect their presence. It costs about 200,000 yen, and is small enough to be placed on the edge of a bed, without disturbing the patient."

Asked about other uses for the device, Professor Ueda replied that "the manufacturers are also considering making a version that can be installed in elevators, and will be connected to a piercingly loud audio alarm. We all know how unpleasant the release of a fart in an enclosed space can be, and this device just might persuade people to hang on to their flatus until the doors open." *(Shukan Shincho [Japan], 22/12/01. Spotter: Andrew J. Morris)*

— o —

"There's no question of us dumbing down our news presentation," TV producer Stilian Ivanov told a press conference in Sofia, "only of trying to broaden its appeal. We carefully select all our newsreaders, and I can guarantee that all the girls are intelligent, and certainly not vulgar. It's just that while they're reading the news, they'll also be taking their clothes off."

Ivanov (a producer on Bulgaria's MSAT channel) was defending the content of his station's latest news programme, *The Naked Truth*, presented by Galina Petrova. "The newsreaders are selected according to three criteria – general knowledge, writing a news item, and taking their clothes off – and there was certainly nothing sleazy about last night's edition. Galina started in a red suit as she reported on a debate about army reform between President-elect Georgi Parvanov and Defence Minister Nikolai Svinarov. Announcing an IMF mission to Bulgaria, she took off her jacket, then unbuttoned her blouse while reporting on new demands by customs officials. Reporting on a bomb hoax at Sofia City Hall, she removed her top, then stripped down to a frilly white bikini while telling viewers that the government was negotiating with Peugeot-Citroen about the privatisation of Bulgaria's motor industry. Then she removed her bra, to applause from the studio audience, while announcing that Bulgaria had won three gold medals at a badminton competition in Greece. After that, we went to the weather."

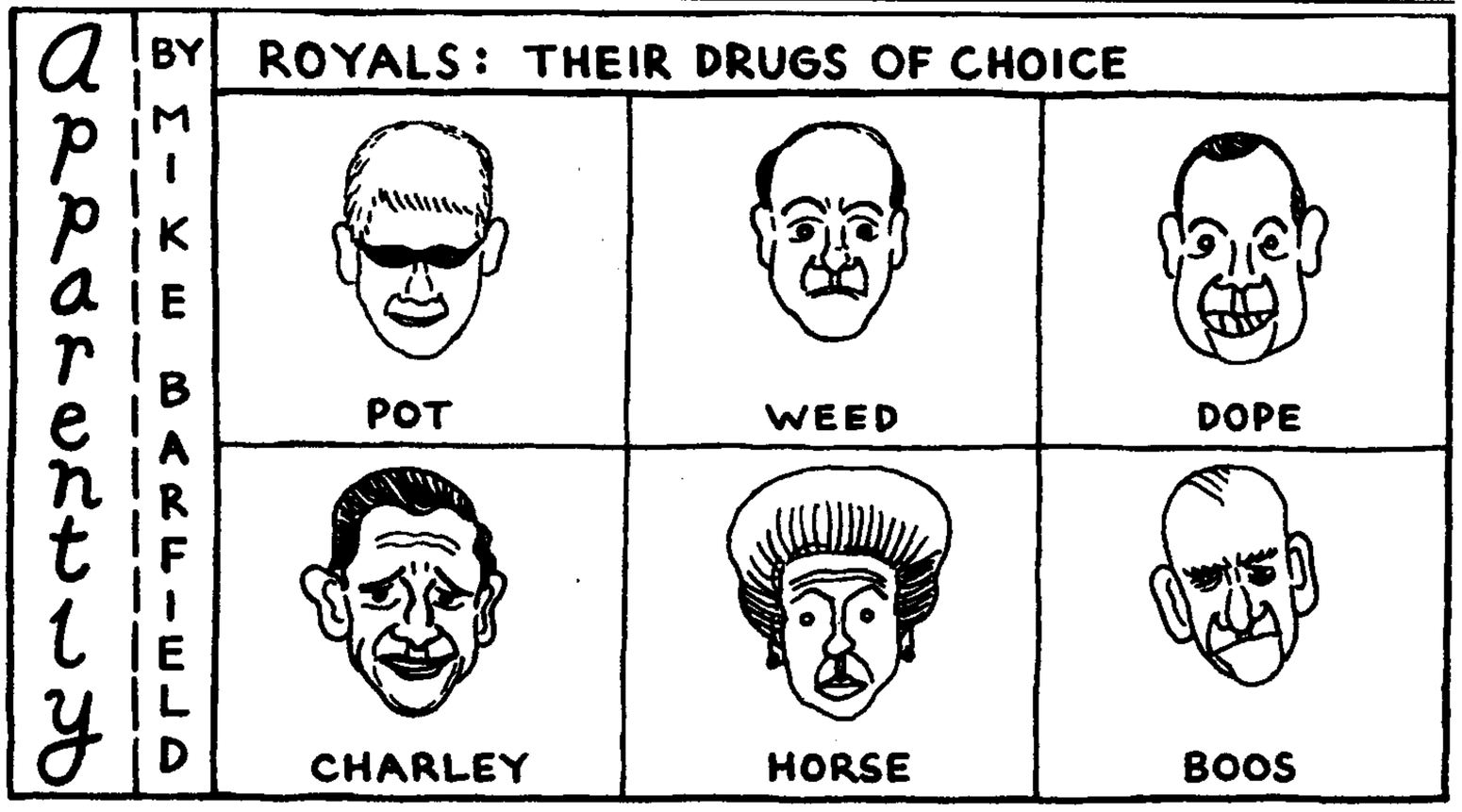
The Naked Truth is also broadcast by the German TV group RTL. MSAT is now planning a political analysis show, where public figures will be invited to discuss current affairs while a presenter takes her clothes off. *(AFP, 11/12/01. Spotter: Richard Baldry)*

— o —

"I first spotted the defendant just after midnight, driving very slowly on the wrong side of the road with his headlights switched off," Police Sergeant Marc May told Wellington District Court. "I signalled for him to stop, but he ignored me, so I followed him for about 20 kilometres on the road from Paraparaumu and Otaki, during which time he was constantly veering from one side of the road to the other. When he finally pulled over, I expected him to be drunk, but he wasn't. Instead, he told me that he was an amateur astronomer searching for a

black hole, and that they were easier to see with his lights off."

Before passing sentence on Peter Thomas Smith, 35, Judge Richard Watson told him that "your actions were highly irresponsible and could have resulted in fatalities. You claim that you were driving so slowly because you wanted to make it to Auckland on a single tank of fuel, but that is no excuse. Furthermore, astronomy is not a suitable occupation while driving a car. And although I am no astrophysicist, I'm pretty certain that black holes are not visible to the naked eye. That's why they're called black holes. However, I do accept that you were on medication, and were under a lot of stress because your partner had recently had his penis removed, so I shall not impose a custodial sentence. You are hereby disqualified from driving for 15 months, and fined $1,260." (Dominion [Wellington], 29/11/01. Spotter: Auban Payne)



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

And I'd like to say "It's nice to be back". But, d'you know, in a sense it isn't that nice.

And it's not just because the weather in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh and all the other places I've been to is warmer and sunnier than it is here in St Albion's!

No, it's that the people are warmer and sunnier!

Ever since Cherie and I came back from our recent world tour, we seem to have heard nothing but whingeing and petty complaints from all directions.

"Oh, Vicar, isn't it awful that my dying mother had to wait 36 hours on a hospital trolley."

"Oh, Vicar, my son's just been knifed for his mobile."

"Oh, Vicar, I've had to give up going to work because there aren't any trains."

Honestly, people will complain about anything, won't they? Haven't they got anything else to worry about?

In the countries I've just been visiting, you get a different perspective altogether, I can tell you!

They're not wasting time moaning about silly little things like trains being late and their mothers dying in hospital!

They just get on with it, in a proper Christian spirit!

If you ask me why I don't spend more time here in the parish, hey, I could reply "Who would want to, with all you lot grizzling and criticising all the time?"

But seriously, did St Paul spend his whole time in his home town of Tarsus listening to the Tarsans complaining about camel trains arriving late?

Well, he might have done, but then no one would ever have heard of him, would they?

I mean, he went everywhere! Just look at this schedule! Damascus, Thrace, Crete, Malta, Rome, Macedonia, Corinth, Tuscany! Dear me! No wonder he was so exhausted at the end of it all!

But he didn't give up! He didn't stop delivering the good news to all the peoples of the world!

Which is why I am shortly going off to Africa, as you may have read!

And what a tremendous challenge that is, this huge country with all its terrible problems – war, drought, Aids, plagues, famine!

Obviously it's not something that I can solve overnight! It might take a little while, even as long as a year!

But what kind of vicar would I be if I just sat at home in the vicarage sorting out the problems of the parish?

Haven't any of you heard of the great missionaries of history who did so much to make Africa what it is today, like Dr Livingstone? (No relation to our friend Ken from the Aquatic Pets Centre, I'm glad to say!)

And now it's my turn, to go out and take the good news to all those poor people who have never heard of the Third Way, and have to live in countries where there is no proper infrastructure, very little transport, inadequate medical services and violent crime is an everyday occurrence.

So, wish me God speed, and let's hope that when I get back, I shall see a more positive attitude from the people of this parish.

Is that too much to ask?

Tony

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

I was frankly flabbergasted when I heard that the Vicar had taken on Mr Birt from the TV Rental Shop to advise him on what to do about everything. Where's the Vicar been living these past few years? Doesn't he realise that this joker couldn't organise a

Yours sincerely
G. Dunwoody (Mrs)
Dunwoodin, Crewe Road

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters that are rude about Mr Birt, for obvious reasons.

PARISH ROUND-UP

AC WRITES: I wonder how many of you were lucky enough to hear the Vicar's uplifting Sunday morning interview with Mr David "Dave" Frost on the very popular radio show he runs for our local hospital, 'Off Your Trolley'? For those of you who missed it, I reprint the highlights below:

DAVE: Super to have you on the show, Vicar! Thanks for offering your services! You see, "services"? Ha, ha, ha!

VICAR: I think this morning our hearts are all going out to Prince Charles, for having to face what must be every parent's worst nightmare. As a father who's been through something very similar, with my own teenage son, I know we would all want to pay tribute to the sensitive and caring way in which I coped with this difficult problem.

DAVE: Super, Tony. That was great. And now, for all of you in the A&E Department, here's something to cheer you up – Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody..."

Announcements

We were all of course delighted to hear that Mr Kennedy, the minister of the United Liberal Democratic Reformed Church, is at last planning to "tie the knot" with his long-time partner Ms *(fill in name, Alastair)*. We all hope that Charles will display a bit more loyalty to (*fill in name, Alastair*) than he has done to some of his old friends – i.e. me!! Let's also hope he won't "overdo" things on his stag night and will manage to sober up by the time he comes to say "I do" (and not "I don't mind if I do", please Charlie?). T.B.

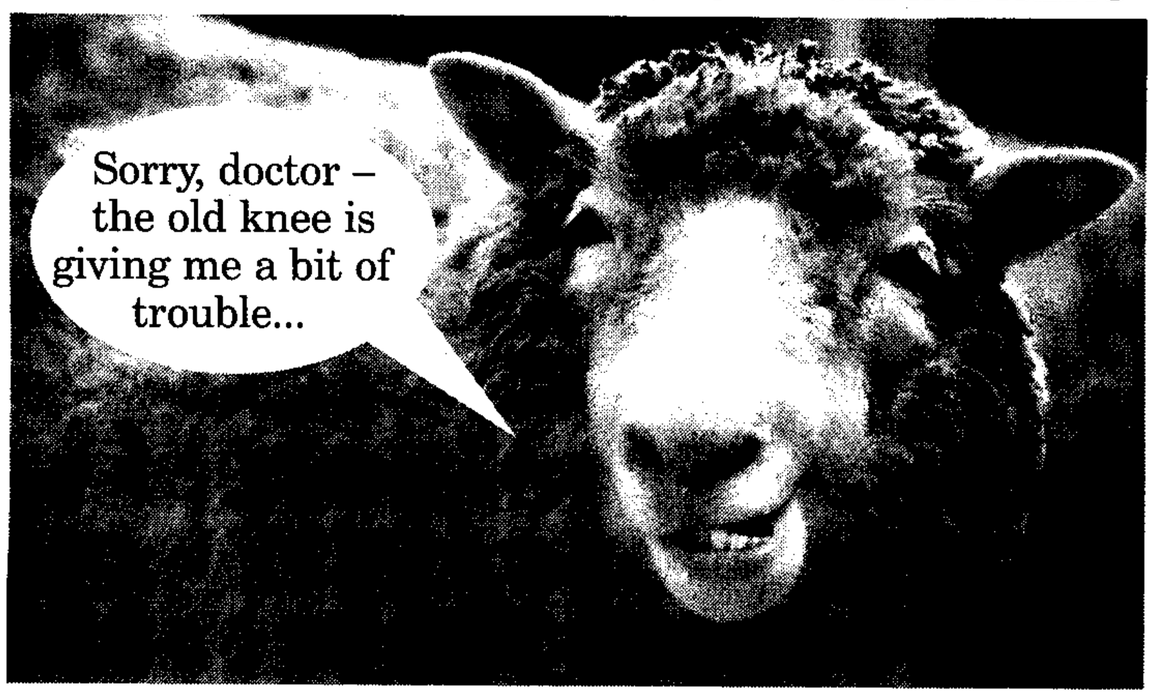
THANKS

A lot of parishioners have said to me recently, "Hey, Vicar, we think ***you*** *should be the new Archbishop of Canterbury." Obviously I'm flattered and it makes a lot of sense, but in my job you've got to learn to delegate and I've got an awful lot on my plate (see above). So thanks all of you for the letters (and e-mails!!), but we'll just have to let someone else get on with the minor jobs! T.B.*

A POSTCARD FROM ULSTER

Thanks to all at the Mission to St Gerry's for this charming postcard. It seems to show a lovely bonfire at a street party, probably a spontaneous display of enthusiasm for the peace process which the vicar set up in Belfast and which has been such a continuing success! A.C.

CLONED SHEEP SURPRISES RESEARCHERS



MILLIONS LOST IN NEW YORK TRAGEDY

by **Ike** and **Tina Brown**

OSAMA bin Laden has added another crime to his long list of atrocities, *writes Tina Brown.* Last night *Talk Magazine*, the symbol of all that was best about America, lay in ruins having collapsed without warning.

As Tina Brown surveyed the smouldering remains of her once-proud empire in the area now known as "sales zero", she declared, "There is no doubt that this is the work of al-Qaeda and the Taliban."

One minute the magazine was a flourishing business full of hundreds of adverts and dozens of exciting pieces. The next, it was a pile of rubbish. Or was it the other way round?

© All sycophantic British newspapers.

The World Mourns For The Talk Pieces You Will Never Read Again

May 2nd 1999

An interview with Hollywood actor Chuck Wisley about his brilliant new film "Pulp Dog", produced by Miramax.

June 4th 2000

Why Chelsea Clinton is a great star who could even be in a Miramax movie.

August 3rd 2000

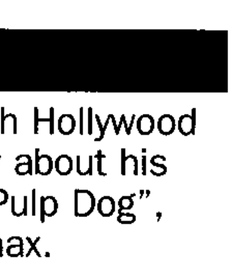
Chuck Wisley tells of his rehab nightmare (and how it will shortly be a brilliant new Miramax film).

September 2001

Will wedding bells ring for lovely Chelsea Clinton and Chuck Wisley? And is there a film in it? *(That's enough articles. Ed.)*

THE REAL GYLES BRANDRETH

by Her Majesty The Queen



IN A unique opportunity, Her Majesty The Queen has been allowed special access to Gyles Brandreth as he goes about his duties trying to fill space in the Sunday Telegraph. Read her amazing insight, starting today.

Tuesday 4th October

Today, Gyles is due to open a paragraph, but he can obviously think of nothing to say. One is surprised that after all these years of appearing in public he canot come up with a few words!

Wednesday 7th October

Gyles has granted an audience to his editor, Sir Dominic Lawson. Lawson asks politely how his latest piece is going.

Brandreth doesn't seem to know who Lawson is and walks past him without a word.

Later, he tells me, "One has to meet so many different people when one is doing this job."

Tomorrow: Gyles celebrates fifty glorious words about the Queen.

Miramax Motion Pictures Present

TINATIC

The Greatest Disaster Movie Of All Time

COSTING over $50 million, with a star-studded cast, the Tinatic was launched with a huge party. Bands played and fireworks exploded in the sky as the world's most celebrated magazine sailed into New York. Everyone said it was unreadable. And they were right.

Cast In Full

TINA BROWN ..... Kate Winslet
HAROLD EVANS ..... Leonardo di Crapio
THE ICEBERG ..... Dame Judi Dench

THE RETURN OF THE SPARTS

Who Are They, The Sinister Left-Wingers Who Want To Bring Britain To Its Knees?

by Timesman **Michael Goverthetop**

WE THOUGHT we had seen the last of the tightly-knit group of die-hard Trotskyist militants whose aim was to overthrow Britain's democracy and set up a Stalinist dictatorship in its stead. But now they are back. Make no mistake, the madmen of the left have returned with a vengeance and, like rats, this time they are stronger and more virulent than ever before.

Total Rubbish

● Here they are – the evil men who could destroy our way of life for ever:

Mick Spart, 57, senior shop steward of the powerful TEACUP union, currently in dispute with Connex North Central over Toilet Tissue Allowances for Non-Driving Auxiliary Personnel.

Eric Spart, 38, part-time A-Level Media Studies supply teacher at Neasden's notorious Robert Mugabe Comprehensive School.

Louise Spartian, 38, radical left-wing lawyer who regularly represents guilty clients on political grounds. Has appeared on "Question Time", criticising Stephen Byers and getting a round of applause.

Paul Spart, 61, notorious anarchist agitator and journalist who writes a weekly column for the influential "Sparts and Spartsmen" magazine (circulation 3).

Jeremy Sparty, 49, Stalinist stand-up comedian and regular guest on the subversive radio programme "Gardeners' Question Time". Once wrote letter to Guardian making joke about President Bush.

(That's enough Sparts. Ed.)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

TEENAGER SMOKED POT AND HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK

by Our Entire Staff

A 16-year-old boy went several times to a pub and smoked a joint in a shed outside.

(Reuters)

INSIDE

- That teenage boy story in full **2-6**
- Hundreds of pics of teenage boy **7-8**
- Blurred pics of boy's friends **9**
- Is it every parent's worst nightmare? *ask 15 of our top columnists* **10-16**
- What's all the fuss about, for Heaven's sake? *ask the other* 15 **17-26**
- Does teenage drinking and pot-smoking lead to terminal insanity? *asks Dr Thomas Utterfraud* **27**
- Should the police have arrested the teenage boy? *ask 100 of our top reporters* **28-32**
- Bring back flogging for teenage boy, say 78% of London's cabbies **33**
- Leading article – "Why Teenage Boy Is A Lesson For Us All" **34**
- "Have We All Gone Stark Staring Mad?" *asks Paul Johnson,* "I Know I Have." **35**

LATE NEWS

Blonde woman returns to read out news on channel no one watches **94**

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Prof. Stanley Unwin, Master of Gobbledygook

Farewellylode. So. Thenfull
Stanwin Unleymold.

Poppetyclogs
Toesyturnyup.

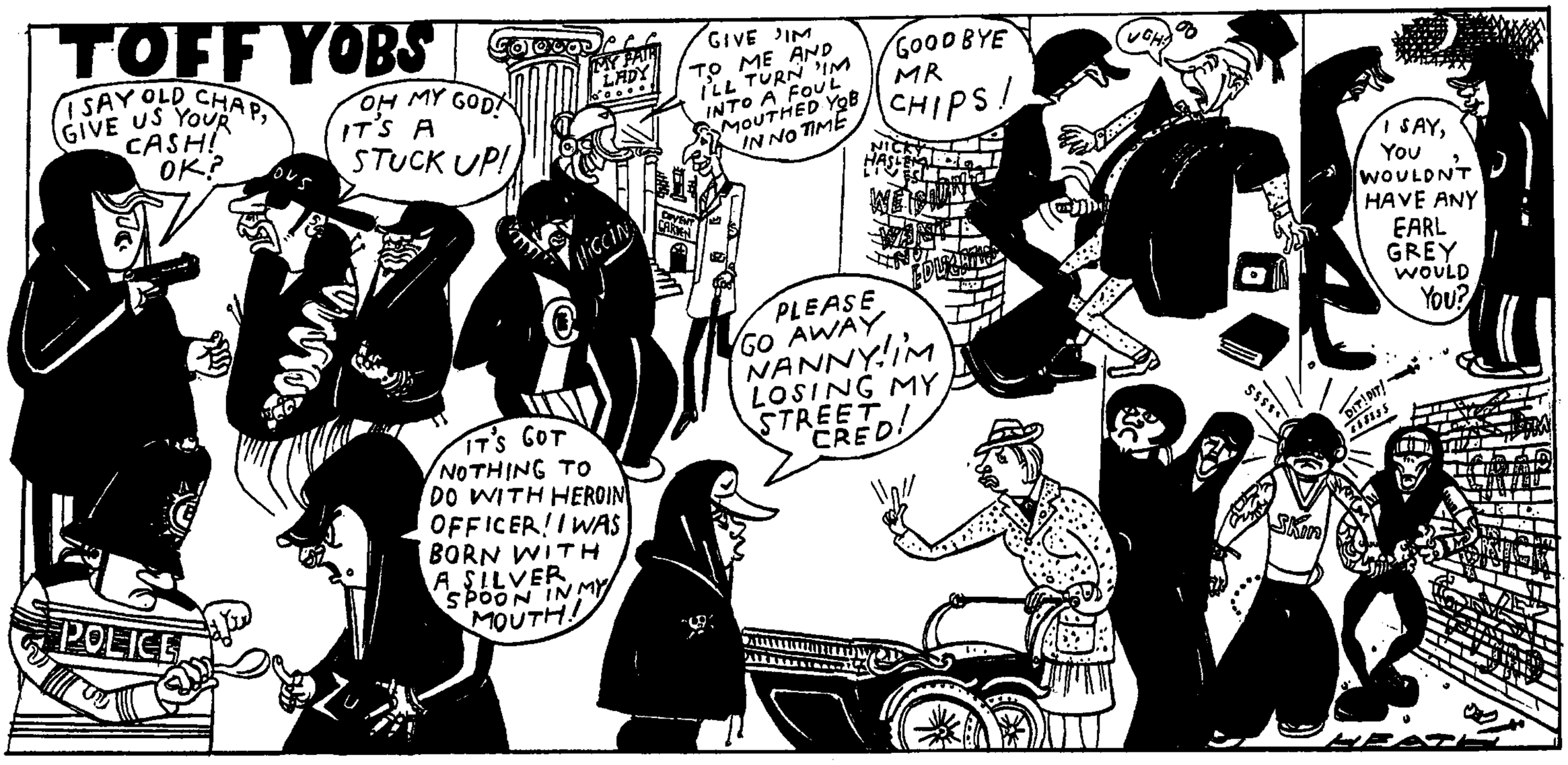
Deep joy
Or rather
Sadlymost.

E.J. Thribbledygook (½17)

School news

St Hashcakes

Marijuana Term begins today. There are 1,207 users in the school. R.S.J. Dope-Ffiend (Rizlas) is Keeper of the Stash. P.L.R. Pothead (Roaches) is Captain of Reefers. Mr L.S. Dealer replaces Dr Methadone as Head of Chemistry. He will be organising the school trip. The Bong will be held on The Grass on 23rd February. There will be a performance of the School Play ("Trainspotting") in the Uppers Hall on 7th March. Tickets can be obtained from the Bursar, Wing Commander "Spliffy" Spliffington O.C. Ecstasies will be on 7th March.


TOFF YOBS
I SAY OLD CHAP, GIVE US YOUR CASH! OK?
OH MY GOD! IT'S A STUCK UP!
GIVE 'IM TO ME AND I'LL TURN 'IM INTO A FOUL MOUTHED YOB IN NO TIME
GOODBYE MR CHIPS!
UGH!
I SAY, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ANY EARL GREY WOULD YOU?
PLEASE GO AWAY NANNY! I'M LOSING MY STREET CRED!
IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH HEROIN OFFICER! I WAS BORN WITH A SILVER SPOON IN MY MOUTH!
POLICE
MY FAIR LADY
COVENT GARDEN
NICKY HASLEM LIVES
SKIN
DIT! DIT! DIT!

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LORD PARKINSON

In your years in politics, did spoons play any sort of part that you can remember?

I know what you're getting at, but I've already made it clear that I am not going to talk about any of that.

Going back to that famous election night triumph in 1983, when you appeared at the window with the woman who'd...

I told you before I am not prepared to talk in any way about my private life. I was assured by your editor that our discussion would be strictly limited to the subject of spoons. I have nothing to hide on the subject of spoons.

You are now quite a wealthy man, Lord Parkinson. You could afford any spoon you want, couldn't you?

What's that supposed to mean?

Nothing. I was just interested in what sorts of spoons you might want to buy, if you could?

Look, I'm quite happy with the spoons I've got. I don't need to go out and buy other spoons. And my wife would support everything I've said. We've always been absolutely open with one another, when it comes to things like spoons.

Did spoons loom large in the affair with Sara Keays which brought a premature end to your political career.... Hullo... hullo... Lord Parkinson...?

NEXT WEEK: Sir Cliff Richard — *"Me And My Trainers".*

"Bruce – I think Skippy's trying to tell us something"

THE CIVIL WAR

Presented by TV's TRISTRAM HUNT

(Shot of Boden-catalogue-type model standing outside BBC)

Hunt *(for it is he):* It was here in the year 2002...

(He holds calendar up to shaky hand-held camera. Calendar reads '2002')

Hunt: ...that the Civil War began between the Blockheads...

(He holds up a photograph of himself captioned 'Dr Tristram Hunt')

Hunt: ...and the Old Queens.

(He holds up a photograph of the historian captioned 'Dr David Starkey'. Cut to Hunt playing Tiddlywinks)

Hunt: This Civil War which bitterly divided Britain's historians was no game of Tiddlywinks.

(Cut to Hunt playing Frisbee on beach)

Hunt: Like this frisbee, the war spun out of control as the establishment forces accused the new revolutionary presenters of 'dumbing down'.

(Cut to Hunt wearing nappy with giant dummy in mouth)

Hunt: On the other side, the young rebels accused the establishment of being boring and obsessed with facts.

(Cut to Hunt standing on a bridge over a ravine)

Hunt: Could the gap be bridged? Would standards plummet?

(Hunt jumps off bridge on bungee rope and then bounces back up into sky)

Hunt: Or would ratings soar?

(Cut to Hunt having dinner with Michael Winner)

Hunt: There could only be one winner.

(Cut to re-enactment sequence featuring an actor playing the part of Tristram Hunt being given a new contract by the BBC)

Hunt: And only one loser.

(Cut to Hunt outside the BBC)

Hunt: Which is where our story began.

NEXT WEEK: Ant and Dec on the Counter-Reformation.

A Taxi Driver writes

Every week a well-known cabdriver is asked to comment on an issue of topical importance.

THIS WEEK: **Dave Yelland** (Cab No. 3246) on the rights of the al-Qaeda prisoners-of-war held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Well, stands to reason, how can they be prisoners-of-war when there wasn't even a bloody war – not a real war like England v. Germany in the World Cup, I mean, they go on about human rights, but we didn't hear much about that when the Taliban blew up those giant Buddhists, did we? I mean anyone can say they're an army, just because they've got a towel on their head and wave a gun around, I mean even the Kray brothers could have called themselves a bleedin' army, guv, I had that Ronnie in the back of the cab once, a lovely gentleman, he put a gun to my head and nicked all my takings.

NEXT WEEK: Borry Johnson on You Can Stuff The Euro Up Your Eu-Know Where!!!

Where Are They Now?

No. 94
Osama Bin Laden

● We don't know

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
THE PRESS ARE ALWAYS ON OUR BACKS...
THEY DON'T REALISE THAT I'D GIVE MY LIFE FOR THIS CLUB!
YEH, AND THE ONE ON THE HIGH STREET
OH YEH... ALRIGHT DARLING!

THE DAILY TUDORGRAPH

10 Groats (or 26.42 curos) — Friday January 25

CONCERN GROWS OVER YE LOW COMPANIONS OF YE PRINCE HARRY

by Ye Editor Of Ye Tudorgraph
ST CHARLES MOORE

MAKE no mi*ft*ake about it, ye throne of England hath been rocked to its foundations by ye late*ft* shock revelations concerning ye drinking habits of Prince Hal, ye royal per*f*onage.

According to ye Newes Of Ye Known World, ye Prince hath been re*f*orting to a lowe tavern in Eastcheap, Ye Boare's Head, where he hath been carou*f*ing long into ye night with a crewe of lewd and licentious reprobates.

Who are they? We name ye guilty parties who hath led ye innocent prince into a life of shameless debauchery and crime:

• *Mafter JACK FALSTAFF, a notorious haunter of ale houfes and ftudent at ye Royal College of Agriculture in ye ancient market town of Cirencester.*

• *Mafter BARDOLPH, a notorious rake and reprobate, alfo ftudying land management at ye Royal College*

• *Miftress DOLL TARA PALMER-TOMKINSON, a wench and hussey who is faid to be "no better than she should be".*

But whilft Prince Harry di*f*porteth himself with his crew of vagabonds, the que*f*tion on every lip is – when will Harry's father take ye boy firmly in hand and *f*end him for professional coun*f*elling? *(Surely "have his head cut off?" Ed.)*

Tomorrow: Henry IV Part Two. Referve your copy now!

Ye Prince & Companion On Way To Ye Pubbe

ON OTHER PAGES

* Ye 100 Yeares War Breaks Out page 2
* *Ye Blacke Deathe – Yes, It's Back! page 3*
* Who Shoulde Be Ye New Archbishop Of Canterbury – Ye Choose! page 8
* *Introducing Our Neweste Columnist, Mafter William Deedes page 10*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Labour's Blue Thinking

NEW Labour have reaffirmed their promise to continue their commitment to 'blue thinking'.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister said: "Blue thinking is a phrase that Tony Blair has become synonymous with – it encapsulates his political flair and unique vision – and has nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that he's nicked all his ideas from the Conservatives".

(A.P.)

Royal Danger

CANNABIS users up and down the country today warned the public about the dangers of being a member of the Royal Family.

"When they first get into Royalty they think they can handle it," said one hippie. "But they end up paranoid and lethargic, they lose co-ordination and, as they are unable to get out of bed in the mornings, are pretty much unemployable." *(P.A.)*

NHS 'to go private'

THERE was no surprise throughout Britain yesterday after it was announced that the NHS had decided to go private.

"This is the last thing we wanted to do – but we had no choice," said one frustrated hospital. "We've been at the back of the waiting list for some decent treatment from New Labour for over six years."

(BUPA)

The Daily Telegraph

Est 1855

Time for our Leader to stop messing about in foreign countries and come home to sort out the problems here

Many of our readers will have read about his exploits in Afghanistan with some amusement. But surely we are all agreed that the place for any responsible leader in a crisis is behind his own desk. Charles Moore is letting us all down by his silly foreign jaunts and *(Shurely shome mishtake? Deputy Ed)*

[redacted]

Durham Advertiser

WAR ON PRETZELS

DAY 94

U.S. Special Forces round up suspected pretzel salesmen and deport them to a military base on Cuba.

Man arrested on aeroplane carrying pretzel concealed in his shoe.

Blair makes speech pledging S.A.S. troops to help fight the international pretzel menace.

Documents found in Kabul reveal Do-It-Yourself Pretzel Assembly Manual in possession of al-Qaeda.

Britons may have been trained in the use of pretzels.

American warplanes destroy "Cheesy Wotsit" factory in Slough by mistake, killing hundreds of innocent ***(That's enough War On Pretzels. Ed.)***

APOLOGY

Iain Duncan Smith

IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may in recent months have given the impression that the Conservative Party made an appalling mistake in choosing Mr Iain Duncan Smith as its leader. We may have reinforced this impression with such headlines as 'Iain Dimmy Smith Is Worse Than Hague', 'A Prawn's Got More To Say Than Colourless IDS' or 'This Coughie-Nosed Twit Must Go'.

We now realise that Mr Duncan Smith is in fact a brilliant tactician who is playing a long game, which is only just beginning to bear fruit.

Such dazzlingly original policy proposals as his article in the Sunday Telegraph suggesting that the House of Lords should be called 'The Senate', and his inspired promotion to the front bench of such charismatic figures as Mr Oliver Letwin, have produced a sea-change in British politics which will sweep Mr Blair from power in less than 50 years. We would like to apologise for any confusion which may have been caused by our previous articles. *© All newspapers*

Campaign to save albatross launched

BLAIR TO SET UP INQUIRY INTO 'BLOODY SUNDAY INQUIRY'

by Our Political Staff **Londonderry Irvine** and **Bloody Mary Kenny**

THE Government is to hold a top-level public inquiry into what ministers were last night describing as "one of the most shocking atrocities in the history of Northern Ireland".

Its aim will be to establish precisely what happened on that fateful day all those years ago when hundreds of highly-trained professional lawyers arrived in the city of Londonderry and began recklessly charging huge fees in all directions.

Hundreds of millions of pounds simply vanished, as the lawyers became responsible for the greatest waste of money in the long and bloody history of the legal profession.

Derry And Tommies

The chief concern of the inquiry will be to investigate the controversial role played by prime minister Tony Blair, who ordered in the lawyers "without thinking through the inevitable consequences of such a shamelessly political act".

The new inquiry, which is likely to last for several hundred years, will be held in the Millennium Dome and chaired by a leading independent lawyer, Ms Cherie Booth QC, who will receive a nominal fee of £1 million a day.

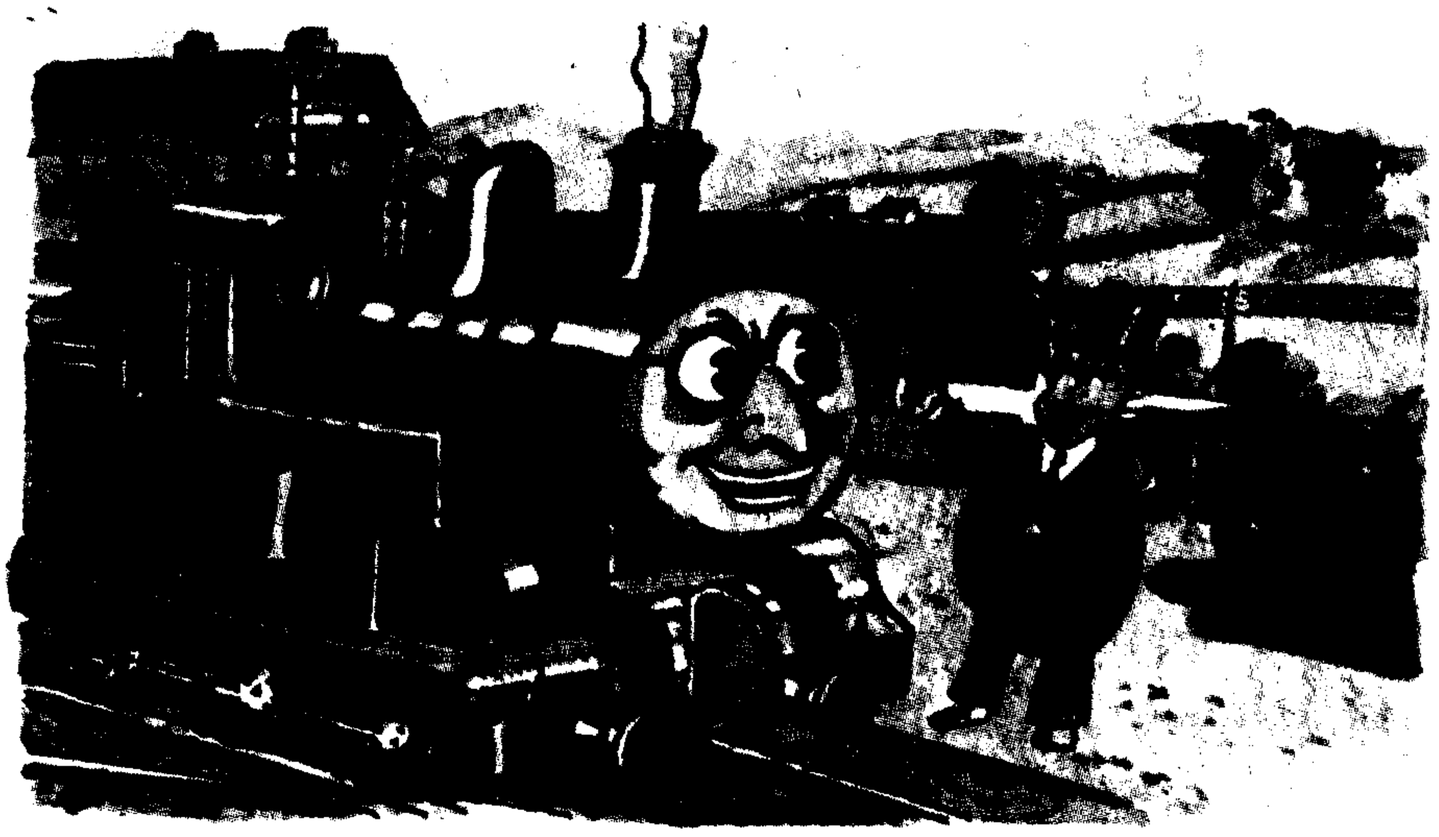
JOHN THE THINK TANK ENGINE

THE Fatuous Controller had a special job for John. "I want you to sort out this mess for me," he said.

John was so pleased. He huffed and puffed and let out a cloud of hot air. He rang his bell and tooted his whistle.

But sadly he didn't go anywhere and was shunted into a siding and left to rust.

"Hooray!" said everyone.



THE ANGINA MONOLOGUES

"...so the doctor says to me 'Mrs Casey, I'm afraid it's serious, but we have caught it in time and with treatment you should be right as rain.... But you must put your feet up and take it easy Mrs Casey...' He's one of the best there is acording to Nicole my eldest... Blah... Blah... Blah..."

Cherie Blair *Not* At Public Event Shock

by Our Political Staff **U. Biquitous**

CHERIE Blair surprised onlookers at an event yesterday when she failed to make an appearance or be photographed for the newspapers.

The Prime Minister's wife stunned the organisers of the event by not arriving wearing an ethnic costume or a new trouser suit and then not chatting happily to celebrities like Kate Winslet or Harry Potter.

"It was incredible," said one spokesman, "Cherie wasn't there looking marvellous and being wonderfully natural with the children or the old people or whoever they were."

Celebrity Blairs

A Downing Street spokesman, however, issued a statement at once, saying, "Although Cherie Blair tries to be everywhere at all times, it is possible that she did miss this event due to being at another one."

Queen Cherie is 49.

HITLER TO STEP DOWN

by our Media Staff **Lord Dacre of Dally Mail**

AFTER a controversial five-year stint in charge of the Third Reich, Adolf "Hitler" Hastings is to retire, to write his memoirs of the Second World War.

Says Herr Hitler, "They have been happy years. I much enjoyed my various campaigns, but even the most dedicated dictator has to recognise when enough is enough."

In his retirement, Herr Hitler looks forward to shooting millions of peasants *(surely 'pheasants'? Ed)*.

"Blasted train, we had to eat the dead and drink our own urine"

'FAT CATS' TO CLOSE

by Our Showbiz Staff **William Rees-Moggy**

AFTER twenty-one years of delighting its accountants, the long-running West End show 'Fat Cats' is to come to an end.

The legendary spectacular, featuring Cameron Mackintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber, set new standards in the world of money with its charming story of two lovable Fat Cats who get incredibly rich. Who can forget numbers like £136 million in London? $500 million on Broadway? Or 1000 billion euros worldwide?

Said a tearful Andrew Lloyds Bank last night, "All good things have to come to an end. And some things that aren't any good do as well."

A GLENDA SLAGG SPECIAL

Fleet Street's Columnist Of The Year (1973) Speaks Out On The Burning Issue Of The Day

■ **HATS OFF to Prince Charles for a first-class piece of modern parenting!!?!! No dad could have handled the situation better!?!! Faced with a teenage son who'd gone a bit wild in the school hols, he could have done his nut and thrashed the boy within an inch of his life. Many would have said he deserved it. But not me, mister!?!!**

And I speak as one who has been there, done it and got the T-shirt?!?

You showed your concern and your compassion by sending the boy to a drug-rehabilitation clinic, to see for himself the horrors which drugs can wreak on the impressionable youngster of today.

Well done, sire!!!!?!

■ PRINCE CHARLES!?! There's only one word for him. A complete fool!?!?

Is it any wonder that his son has been turned into a crazed drug addict, when he has for years been ignored by his callous, vain, womanising, selfish fool of a father?

If only Charles had stayed at home and listened to his son's problems, as any caring father would have done, Prince Harry would still be alive today.

■ *PRINCE HARRY! Aren'tchasick-ofhim?!!? Just because he's a spoiled rich kid, he can behave like a yob and get away with it!!!?!!*

If it was your kid or mine, he'd have been banged up in a cell, looking at the wrong end of a 10-year sentence?!??

Go on, Prince Hooray!! Scram!!!

■ **THREE CHEERS for Prince Harry! This handsome hunk has shown that the Royals are just like the rest of us!!?!!?**

Not for him the cloistered world of cucumber sandwiches and croquet for tea with the toffee-nosed brigade!?!

No, this People's Prince for the 21st Century is down the boozer, knocking back the pints and smoking the odd spliff with his mates. Well done, your Royal Highness!!!?!

Byeeee!!

DIARY

JILLY COOPER

Don't you just ADORE lovely, gorgeous, hugely successful Secretary of State for Transport Stephen Byers? And I feel so desperately, desperately sorry for him, with all those great big horrible trains to look after, all of them racing up and down the country – rather like my heroine Petunia's tongue as it laps up and down the underfolds of dark, handsome, madly successful Rupert's right ear-lobe!!

Whenever I see poor, vulnerable Stephen Byers being subjected to ruthless, cruel cross-questioning by some ghastly journalist who probably hasn't even washed, I honestly feel like burying my head in my Harrods of Knightsbridge duck-feather pillow and sobbing my heart out at the absolutely beastly, beastly time he's having.

I literally go into a "state" of utter "transports"(!!!) whenever I catch sight of his gorgeous lovely super dark leather executive briefcase. I so LONG to know what he keeps in it, don't you? Tucked seductively inside his green file, might there just be a super seductive dark leather posing-pouch, which hugely successful Stephen dons literally the MOMENT he gets home, before clutching the fridge door in his lightly-furred right hand and pulling it open with a single, manly thrust, in search of a bottle of Dom Perignon Finest Champagne costing nearly £100 a bottle from top wine merchants Berry Bros based in London's hugely glamorous West End? Oh, bliss-bliss-blissy-blissed-bliss!

New novel out in late Spring – so huge and jam-packed full of lovely, super characters that it might be best described as long a-"weight"-ed!!!

It's all set in the fabulous world of Fine Art – and that includes the Hon. Amelia Wiggle-Worthy, the twenty-something Fine Tart (!!) with skin-tight leather trousers, cheek-bones as high as a really high building and smouldering breasts to match.

Something tells me you're hooked already! That's so sweet of you, it really is, I almost feel like blubbing my eyes out, I really do, you're so impossibly kind, you really are. Anyway, the Hon. Amelia Wiggle-Worthy is the highly-sexed and hugely successful auctioneer at top Fine Art auction house Smotherby's, and Amelia has fallen passionately head-over-heels in lust with hugely successful lothario dark-eyed 16th century Italian porcelain expert Lord Guy Bigge-Crotch, whose muscles are as full of ripples as the Bay of Naples, where he first seduced moist-lipped, full-breasted, twin-legged Cordelia Van Pert-Bottom whose lovely gorgeous super adorable mongrel puppy Rachmaninov has just been run over and killed in an incredibly sad-making moment as a wicked act of revenge by hugely successful and irresistibly attractive but cold-hearted and ruthless but well-endowed and hugely wealthy but sadistic and really rather beastly entrepreneur aristocrat Viscount Conrad Nasty-Mann.

Little did I realise before I undertook five years of intensive research guided by my lovely friend the utterly adorable and hugely successful ex-head of the V&A Sir Roy Strong (on whom the madly attractive and stunningly seductive bronzed Museum Director Sir Roy Heathcliff is based) on a tour of Christie's, quite how much frantic, thrusting, really super sex they go in for in the orgasmic world of antique porcelain.

Take this extract, in which Lord Guy Bigge-Crotch escorts the to-die-for Amelia through his priceless well-researched collection 16th century Sevres vases for the very first time:

"And this," said Guy, picking up another priceless exhibit, his eyes still fixed on Amelia's full, high, incredibly springy breasts – soft and yielding, yes, but also ruthlessly ambitious and thrusting, "is one of my finest pieces of hand-crafted antique china. It's from the 16th century, which of course actually means it was made sometime in the 1700s."

Amelia noticed Lord Guy's long, long, really very long fingers clutching the priceless Sevres vase. How she wished they were even now unbuttoning her expensive wet-look silk blouse which cost £375 from Prada in London's impossibly glamorous New Bond Street. "I love him" she sobbed to herself in a frenzy of despair whilst maintaing a look of deepest composure on her face, covered as it was with a layer of perfect spot-free skin.

"Oh, hang it – who cares about bloody china!" sighed Lord Guy impatiently, as with a manly swing he threw the priceless Sevres vase over his rippling, feverishly sweating left shoulder, "All I want, Amelia, you hugely successful but nonetheless strangely insecure international beauty, is to bury myself deep inside your smouldering breasts".

Amelia swooned. "Mon Dieu!" she gasped, as she watched her breasts smoulder in his hugely successful hands. At moments of passion, the hot, red, moist French blood of her mother, the impossibly glamorous but desperately unhappy Comtesse Madeleine de Villefranche, seemed to course through her tongue.

At that moment, the priceless 16th century Sevres vase shattered against the priceless 15th century Ming serving-dish and both fell headlong onto a priceless 36 piece Louis XIV dinner service, smashing it into hundreds of little pieces.

"Whoops! Don't MING us, we'll MING you!" said Lord Guy, bringing out his impossibly long and hugely successful man-hood which glistened like the moist nose on a healthy pedigree Labrador puppy.

Amelia clutched her sides with laughter at his brilliant pun. "SEVRES you jolly well right!" she quipped in response, her smouldering breasts springing up and down like excited dachsunds at dinner time. "Bonjour!" she added, once again her passionate French blood seeming to take control of her body as she raced headlong onto the field of passion.

I must just say a really lovely big heartfelt gorgeously gorgeous "thank you" to all of my literally brilliant big-hearted friends whose unrelenting kindness helped me to write that extract: to swoony adorable John Julius Norwich for letting me measure his darling Labrador puppy's nose for moistness; to endlessly glamorous Robert Robinson, for teaching me all about the feeding habits of dachsunds over a series of delicious meals at hugely expensive restaurants; to dear, gallant Joseph Cooper, who showed me how a man can play a woman like a dummy keyboard; to darling Pope John Paul II, for making me feel at home in the Vatican and letting me in on all his most fruity vestment-dropping secrets; to heart-stoppingly masculine Dr Henry Kissinger, for teaching me how to carpet-bomb a foreign country; to *(continues for 94 pages)*

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

OOPS!
OI! LOOK AT THE DAMAGE YOU'VE DONE TO MY CAR!
I'M SORRY ARE YOU O.K.?
I DUNNO. I COULD'VE BEEN SERIOUSLY HURT THERE, LOVE...
WELL I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD EXCHANGE INSURANCE DETAILS..
YEAH, RIGHT...
WELL, MY VOICE IS INSURED FOR 25 MILLION, MY FACE FOR 10 AND MY PLECTRUM FINGER, ER... I FORGET NOW...

Literary Review

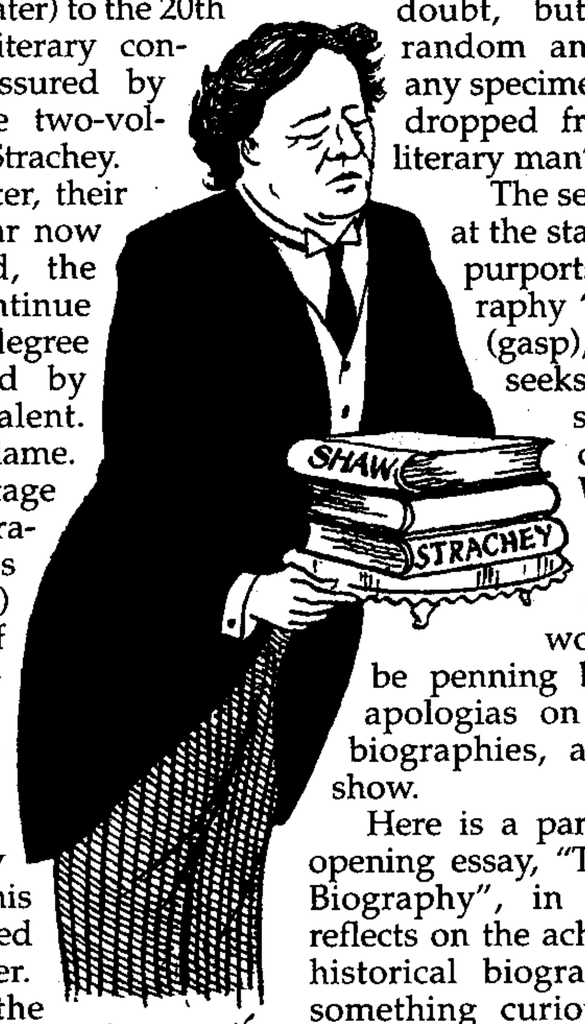
A fading Bloom

Works On Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography
Michael Holroyd
(Little Brown, £20)

MICHAEL HOLROYD invented Bloomsbury. This is the literal truth. Never mind Virginia's umpteen novels, Duncan's pictures, Clive's art criticism or Leonard's multitudinous memoirs. The centrality of the Bloomsbury Group (whose reputation had previously been in very low water) to the 20th century English literary consciousness was assured by Holroyd's massive two-volume life of Lytton Strachey.

Thirty years later, their solitary literary star now six decades dead, the Bloomsberries continue to obsess us to a degree wholly unjustified by their collective talent. We know who to blame.

From the vantage point of the biography – Holroyd's theme (just about) in this collection of reprinted pieces – there is a gloomy symbolism about all of this. Lytton Strachey turned modern biography in one direction; his biographer switched it in another. Strachey made the chronicling of past lives smart, satirical, pointed, economy-size. Holroyd, when he came to Strachey, made it labyrinthine, voluminous, dogged, revelatory.



brian bagnall

Neither approach wholly serves. Reading Strachey – all learned facetiousness and coy face-pulling above the parapet – you want him to be more like Holroyd. Reading Holroyd, in his relentless serial volumes, you want him to be more like Strachey. No prizes for guessing which master the succeeding throng chose to emulate. Peter Ackroyd's 1,200 page take on Dickens took its inspiration here.

Billed by its publisher, the ever reliable Little, Brown, as a top-level inquiry into the nature of modern biographical practice, *Works On Paper* is, if seen if this light, rather a con. It is, in fact, just the usual assemblage of decades-old journalism that distinguished literary figures are wont to issue at various stages in their careers.

Holroyd's rediscovery of William Gerhardie, his introduction to a reprinted novel by the immortal J.L. Carr, his battles over public lending right (our man is a doughty professional campaigner) – all good to have between hard covers, no doubt, but ultimately as random and heterodox as any specimen pile of cuttings dropped from the average literary man's study table.

The serious stuff comes at the start – an essay that purports to attack biography "from the inside" (gasp), another one that seeks to justify it – and seems faintly disingenuous. Who cares about these "Why I Write" excursions? Holroyd would much rather be penning biographies than apologias on why he writes biographies, and boy does it show.

Here is a paragraph from the opening essay, "The Case Against Biography", in which Holroyd reflects on the achievements of the historical biographer: "There is something curiously obsequious too about these all-but-instant historians. . . they are really history's butlers, continually absorbed by their duty of rating the events they announce in the order of conventional importance, always busy solemnly ushering in the facts, for ever replete with their ceremonial duties, and eternally guarding their self-esteem, like Admirable Crichtons, by reminding themselves of their intellectual superiority from their socially inferior position when they return to their isles of Academe..."

Recognise that style, anyone? It is Educated-English-Literary-Chap, and it is surprising anyone still writes this stuff. It would be very surprising too if anyone read it.

A really bad trip

The Promised Land – Travels in Search of the Perfect E
Decca Aitkenhead
(Fourth Estate, £12.99)

EUPHORIA, hallucinations, a sudden urge to dance uncontrollably and hug everyone in the room — Decca Aitkenhead must have felt all of these when Fourth Estate gave her the green light and an expense account to go and write a book about travelling the world taking ecstasy. But imagine the horrific comedown a day later when she sat down to consider what on earth she was going to put in it.

"Anyone who has sat through their friends' drug anecdotes will know that the entertainment lies in the part where they are trying to get hold of the stuff." From this, we can only assume Decca's drug buddies are better company than she is, because her tales of how to "get hold of the stuff" are without exception singularly unentertaining.

It's not easy to tell whether Decca is a bona fide pill-head or a sham-dabbler who takes drugs to make her a more employable left-wing newspaper columnist, yet even the most chemically-untainted could guess that her method for scoring lacks a certain degree of street savvy. It involves going up to people who look like they're on drugs and asking them whether they have any drugs.

Not surprisingly, most people think such flagrantly unsubtle entreaties could only come from a loony, an undercover cop or a first-timer – all best avoided by a dealer who wants to keep dealing. As a result, Decca travels right across America unable to locate one single E, let alone a perfect one.

So it's off to Thailand. And, darn it, no one's taking any Es there either – "There was no ecstasy to buy, of course, because the alternatives were cheaper." But if that was so obvious, why did she go there in search of ecstasy? Hard to say, but it does allow her to toss in several thousand sniffy words tearing strips off gap-year backpackers.

Two English students in particular are lavishly scorned: "To Suzie, the year out was less a rite of passage than the constitutional right of all young professionals, and it was the Third World's duty to keep her in budget." A fair point perhaps, but a bit harsh for young Suzie to get a moral dressing-down from a journalist on a junket being paid to take drugs.

By the time we reach Cape Town the search for the perfect E, which had become the search for any E, has been replaced with the search for something – anything – to write about: "We decided on a detour into journalism. Strictly speaking, the story had very little to do with the perfect E." As a *Guardian* columnist, scraping together a couple of thousand words about very little is what Decca does best, and tales of her and hubby getting into all sorts of scrapes (as presumably you would if you insisted on asking ex-cons for drugs) certainly liven things up a bit. One is tempted to suggest that if Aitkenhead had gone for straight travelogue and ditched the ecstasy, she might have produced something verging on the palatable.

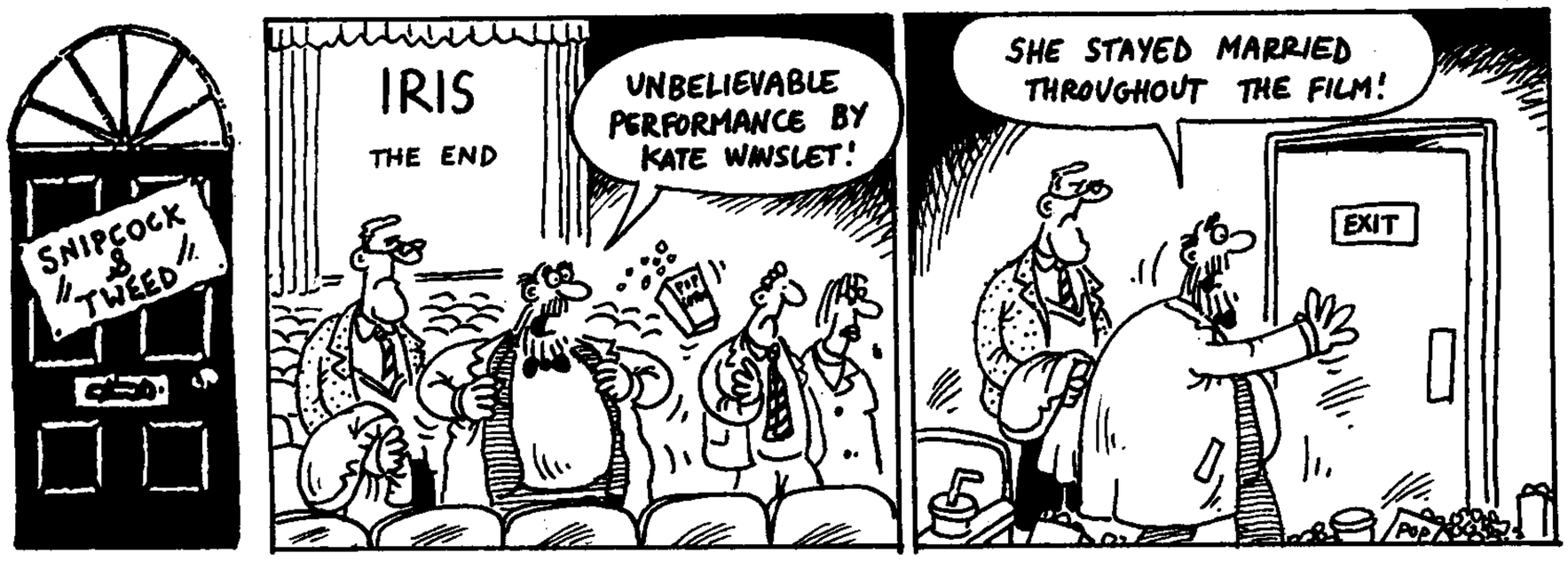
And there's the rub: for without the drugs, the incendiary title and the taboo-busting *Guardian* serialisation, would anyone have published it? *Decca's Travels with Her Husband to Several Well-Known Holiday Destinations* doesn't quite

"I thought that bit where they were both riding their pushbikes fast was dead exciting"

have the same ring, granted, but it would have been a better book. It all suggests some clever selling on Aitkenhead's part ("examining cultural constructs of happiness") and some typical middle-aged gullibility from whoever gave the go-ahead at Fourth Estate.

Anyone who has ever indulged in the odd Class A might want to ask themselves, was there really any mileage in packing off a nostalgic student raver (another one) to tell us where to find good shit? Especially as the answer is self-evident: most of the world's ecstasy comes from Amsterdam, where usage is widely accepted and clubbers are provided with MDMA testing stations to ensure their merchandise has not been cut. Sacre bleu, then, when Decca ends up in Amsterdam on the last day before she's summoned home and suddenly scores a blinder.

In the foreword Aitkenhead informs us that she sold her book on the promise that "this would be hardcore cool". Overlooking the moral questions raised by presenting a year-long amphetamine binge as a cultural odyssey – and there are plenty of them – it is, in fact, quite gratifying that she has ended up hoist with her own petard: an idea that old-timers thought would mean yoof-appeal has turned out to be as limp as a wet sock.



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ MORE news from Blackwells (see last *Eye*) where internecine warfare has erupted on the academic publishing side of the old Oxford family business.

The row is between former chairman Julian Blackwell (known as "Toby) and the board, headed by Toby's nephew Nigel, over whether to sell or float. Though an uneasy peace has been reported, Toby has hinted that he has support from enough fellow shareholders to give him a simple majority to overthrow the board and try to replace it with more sympathetic directors. But it is thought he will need the support of the Blackwell's bookshop business, run by his son Philip. Personally, Philip supports the board rather than his father, but the board of the retail firm may yet overrule him. Either way, it all makes for great spectator sport.

'Bookworm'

A PHILOSOPHER WRITES. . .

The distinguished philosopher A.C. Grayling discusses a topical ethical problem for the benefit of Eye *readers.*

■ REVENGE may be defined as the attempt made by an individual or entity that imagines itself to have been unfairly treated to impose its own form of justice on the individual or institution which it holds responsible.

Of all human emotions, the urge to avenge oneself is perhaps the most barbarous. Reason insists that the altogether primitive need for restitution should be strongly opposed in civilised societies.

There are, of course, certain situations in which revenge can be justified. For example, should a distinguished academic, such as myself, discover that a publication of his has been unfairly noticed in a newspaper by a rival academic, then he is quite at liberty to find an excuse for attacking that person in another newspaper. A recent review of my book *The Meaning of Things* by that scrofulous Irish know-nothing Professor Terry Eagleton is a case in point. . . (*continues. . .*)

Warballs

"The recent horrific turn in world events and the ensuing world economic downturn will most certainly affect sales of air conditioning equipment, according to Paul Brown, general manager of Panasonic Air Conditioning… On a more general note, Brown added that he thought that the penetration of air conditioning into UK shops, hotels and restaurants was still a 'huge way off saturation point', and that during leaner times it will be those businesses that have invested in air conditioning that will have the edge over the competition. 'The entire air conditioning industry should stand together to get this message across,' he said."

— Press release from Panasonic Air Conditioning.

"The tragic events of 11 September 2001 give rise to a number of accounting issues…"

— Bulletin from accountant KPMG.

"It's been a challenging year for all of us involved in recruitment, what with economic difficulties, war and terrorism… Reed Accountancy Personnel have seen an increase in the number of quality candidates registering with us, both through our branch network and through our award-winning website… Please bear me in mind when financial and accountancy recruitment is back on your agenda."

— Pleading letter from Ed Moran, senior consultant at Reed Accountancy Personnel.

"The repercussions of the war in Afghanistan are being felt by at least one UK accountancy body. The ACCA has been forced to push back its exam results date… The new exam release date is now 21 February 2002, not 14 February."

— News from *Passmagazine*'s website.

"It's now almost two months since I wrote to you about the last phase of our drive to raise £25 million… Frankly, we were quite nervous about how Worcester Old Members would react… We were worried that in the wake of the dreadful events of 11 September, Old Members might feel unwilling to contribute generously. We could not have been more (delightfully!) wrong."

— Letter from provost of Worcester College, Oxford, to former students.

"*Talk* magazine, the glossy monthly launched just over two years ago by Britain's super-editor in America, Tina Brown, is to close immediately. The issue just hitting news-stands now is to be its last.

"Staff at the magazine's offices in Manhattan learned of the decision yesterday evening. Ms Brown, who edited the magazine, and its president, Ron Galotti, said that the events of 11 September had condemned the title to an early grave. 'We all had to recognize that 9/11 changed everything,' they said in a brief statement. 'It made it virtually impossible for a stand alone title like *Talk*.'"

— *The Independent.*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE auditoria of London's concert halls and opera houses used to offer quiet refuge from the cares and troubles of the outside world: places of safety and, by long tradition, somnolence.

But not the other night when a small riot broke out in the stalls at Covent Garden thanks to that least-loved member of the critical profession David Fingleton: a lawyer who has managed through the years to wheedle tickets out of opera companies on the strength of a vague association with the *Daily Express* and a couple of obscure magazines.

In his day job as a stipendiary magistrate his claim to fame was that he once made headlines (and received a parliamentary rebuke) for delivering the learned judgment that teachers should expect to be occasionally assaulted by their pupils. In his night job as a critic he is famous for arriving at performances with uncomfortable-looking companions whose function is to poke him when he falls asleep.

On this occasion, though, the pokes were ineffective and Wagnerian-scale snores, rang so grotesquely through the theatre that for half the audience they obliterated what was happening on stage. Hence the scene during the interval which, as Fingleton affected innocence, drew in so many angry people it began to look like a lynch mob. One of the angries threatened to put a plastic bag over Fingleton's head, tied tightly at the neck, if it happened again. Why wait? suggested someone else (another critic).

Perhaps the solution is to send Fingleton some free tickets to the Festival Hall where no one sleeps these days. A recent concert there involved a large gong placed among the audience for maximum effect, which it achieved magnificently. At the first whack it fell over and concussed a nearby punter. As somebody once said: one cannot make great art without sacrifice.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Pseuds Corner

Just as I was thinking that Iranian film is becoming predictable in its devoted following of Italian neo-realism, Meshkini makes the journey, as Pasolini did all those years ago, from the sharply real to the textured and poetic.

ROGER CLARKE
review of 'The Day I Became a Woman',
***Independent* listings mag**

Available in five attractive colours, BeoCom 2 comes with all the latest technology, including a 200 name/number directory. This phone doesn't simply ring, it creates a soothing "ringing tune" created by composer Kenneth Knudsen who reproduced the sound of the phone's aluminium housing falling on the cobblestones of Copenhagen.

***Scanorama*, Swedish Airlines in-flight magazine**

Kate Winslet as the ambidextrous [sic] young Iris in the movie is an irresistible combination of high-mindedness and edge. With her sawn-off hair and bristling underarms, she is the perfect heroine for the post-Taleban moment of bluestocking chic.

TINA BROWN
Times Magazine

Robbe-Grillet's deflectively autobiographical oeuvre ("I have never written about anything save myself") might be all Breton fairy tales and Martiniquais paranoia, but it was composed in Paris. La Tupina [a restaurant] is culinary fiction. There was never a real country inn like this stage on which Xiradakis has performed most of his adult life. "Real" is a word which should never be written without the leavening of quote marks.

JONATHAN MEADES' valedictory restaurant review, *The Times*

The vocabulary for Yves Saint Laurent – sexy, mysterious, strong – still works after a terrorist attack.

TOM FORD

Pseuds Corporate

Sunday Telegraph Magazine

Honda has the 'DNA' to help provide both the vivid dreams as we seek to contribute positively to people and society, but also the commitment to realise these dreams. It is our fervent wish and belief that our energy and vitality will help bring joy to our customers and society as a whole.

Press release

CONTRIBUTORS: Mike Orford, Kate Greaves, C.J. Apperley, Alan Mitchell, Anna Lomax, Jim Leaviss.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

Whitehall Farce

NEWS that John Birt, Adair Turner and other business people have been beavering away in Tony Blair's secretive "forward strategy unit" has raised new interest in secondments to Whitehall.

Also in the unit was Penny Hughes, former president of Coca Cola UK. Coincidentally, Coca Cola made it into the "Top 10 World's Worst Corporations" published this month by the Multinational Monitor for, among other things, allegedly using death squads in Colombia to drive union militants out of its bottling factories. Though Hughes no longer works for Coke, she remains on the board of Vodaphone, whose excessive executive salaries make a mockery of Labour's limp attacks of fat cattery.

In fact the scale of private penetration into the public sector goes much further than the unit. For much of last year Clive Elphick, the "group strategic planning director" of United Utilities, worked part time in the cabinet office "over viewing" the department's "business planning processes". Elphick boasted that his job involved "transferring best practice… from the private sector".

United Utilities demonstrated the superiority of its own "business planning" and "best practice" with the way it ran North West Water last year. Between May and December it was fined more than £60,000 for a series of offences in which streams and rivers were polluted.

Elphick's cabinet office post was arranged by the Whitehall & Industry Group (WIG), itself a private organisation funded by 105 top companies, including leading banks, arms, drugs and construction firms. WIG was set up during the Thatcherite 1980s but now has an impeccably "new" Labour patron in Lord Haskins. Its directors include civil servants like Sue Street, permanent secretary at the culture department, alongside business representatives like Miller McLean, the Royal Bank of Scotland's in-house lobbyist.

WIG arranges secondments of up to three years and shorter attachments lasting less than three months. It recently arranged for an executive from Marks & Spencer to work on "risk management" at the Food Standards Agency (FSA). M&S of course lobbied the government hard on the FSA: in particular it did not want the agency to offer "nutritional advice". It also wanted to be sure the FSA's "risk management" would be "proportionate" and take "costs" into account. M&S wanted to make sure it did not lose cash following FSA food warnings.

Other short term attachments arranged by WIG have put Barclays executives into the cabinet office, Ready Mixed Concrete staff in the Highways Agency, Conoco and Esso people into the DTI, British Airways staff into the transport department and PPP Healthcare execs into the Benefits Agency.

WIG reminds its clients that meetings take place under "Chatham House Rules" – ie the meeting and speakers are secret. WIG has also arranged an attachment for a member of the "security services" to work on "knowledge management" for oil firm Conoco, and it ran a seminar last September for top executives to meet Stephen Lander of MI5. At the seminar MI5 reportedly told some of Britain's biggest companies it may be prepared to provide intelligence on their business partners and rivals abroad.

PS: Firms funding WIG include Accenture, Abbey National, Astrazeneca, BAe, Balfour Beatty, Barclays, BP, BAT, KPMG, Matra BAe, Merck, Miller Group, Bupa, Camelot, Carillion, Conoco, Exxon, Glaxo, Pfizer, RMC, Shell, Smiths Group, Texaco, Thames Water and HSBC.

ARMS SALES

Tony Hawks his wares around India

FORMER North East Scotland Labour MEP Henry McCubbin is not a fan of Tony Blair and didn't believe that the prime minister had gone to India solely on a peace mission (see last *Eye*).

Nor did he believe the following extract from the *Guardian* report of 12 January on the arms trade's campaign to sell a billion pounds worth of Hawk fighters to India. "Mr Blair has also been asked to throw his weight behind the Hawk campaign. Downing Street, after reviewing the request, decided it was not opposed in principle to the sale but that, politically, it would be unwise for the prime minister to be involved."

Mr McCubbin decided to investigate via the Indian media. An item on the BBC's world service in India was headed in English: INDIA DEFENCE MINISTER GEORGE FERNANDES SAYS THAT THE PURCHASE OF BRITISH HAWK TRAINER AIRCRAFT WAS DISCUSSED DURING TONY BLAIR'S VISIT. Unfortunately for Mr McCubbin the news that followed was in Urdu, which he does not understand. So he logged on to the website of the English-language periodical *Outlook India*, and found this, datelined Bangalore, 7 January. "The issue of India acquiring Advanced Jet Trainers was raised by British Prime Minister Tony Blair with Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, defence minister George Fernandes said today. He, however, indicated that no final decision had been taken in this regard. According to reports, British Aerospace is in the race for an estimated one billion dollar contract for the AJTs. Asked about the long-delayed acquisition of AJTs for the Indian Air Force, he told reporters here that he could not answer at the moment but said Blair raised the issue with Vajpayee during his just-concluded visit."

Mr McCubbin, who recalls that during the rows about his visit to India, the prime minister and his spokesmen emphasised that the trip had been arranged for several months, asks: "Why else would he go to India if not to sell weapons of slaughter?" And when better to try to sell Hawk trainer jets to India than at a time the Indians might want to use them?

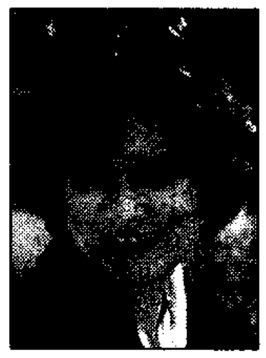
ASBESTOS POISONING

The Battle for compensation

MORE on the scandal highlighted in the last *Eye* of the spate of convenient insolvencies in firms facing compensation claims for asbestos poisoning of their workers and of people living near their factories.

Chief among these firms is Turner and Newell. On 10 January John Battle, Labour MP for Leeds West spoke up for his constituents who have died or suffered from asbestos poisioning. Many of their compensation claims had been "stayed" by the decision of Turner and Newall's new owner, the American giant Federal Mogul, to sue for protection from claims under a complicated insolvency procedure.

Battle



Johnson

Mr Battle's angry and carefully-argued plea for his poisoned constituents was answered by Melanie Johnson, parliamentary under-secretary at the department of trade and industry. Ms Johnson's speech seemed to borrow heavily from the report of accountants Kroll Buchler Phillips, joint administrators to bust British asbestos firms like Turner and Newall.

For instance, the administrators' report points out that after the filing for insolvencies "the resulting stay of litigation against such parties has placed increased financial pressure on the FM Group in the form of higher settlement demands from plaintiffs as well as efforts to force the FM Group to cover the contributions of now-bankrupt co-defendants in existing settlement agreements".

Compare that to what Johnson told parliament: "The resulting stay of litigation against such parties has placed increased financial pressure on the group in the form of higher settlement demands from plaintiffs as well as efforts to force it to cover the contributions of now bankrupt co-defendants in existing settlement agreements."

The International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) website records other such similarities. Taken together they suggest Johnson was simply reading out sections of the administrators' report that were sympathetic to Turner and Newall.

SELBY DATES

GARY HART has gone to prison for five years for causing death by dangerous driving after his Land Rover slewed off a motorway, careered down an embankment and fell on to a main railway line. The resulting accidental crash with two trains caused the deaths of 10 people.

Now that Mr Hart is in prison, North Yorkshire county council, the people arguably responsible for the crash, are moving in a rather leisurely fashion to make sure such a disaster cannot happen again. The *Selby Times* of 3 January reported that "urgent repairs to prevent a repeat of the Great Heck rail disaster are planned for early this year". So urgent are the necessary repairs they have not yet been set in motion. In fact, the paper records, the working party set up by deputy prime minister John Prescott to look into the issue of road safety barriers near motorway bridges "is still meeting and is expected to report back soon".

At Christmas the *Eye* quoted from official government transport documents stressing the necessity of barriers protecting any main road passing over or near a railway line. The cost of the necessary barrier extension at Great Heck has been estimated at £20,000. The cost of the rail disaster is likely to work out at something like £1.4bn.

Meanwhile the *Eye* has had a remarkable letter from David Guy, an architectural student who, in his own words, was "pulled from the wreckage at Great Heck and taken to the intensive care unit at Leeds General Infirmary with a gash in my head through which I had lost half my blood". He suffered multiple injuries, broke his back, neck and sternum, and was in hospital for three weeks.

"I do not share the view," he writes, "that the prosecution of Mr Hart brings any resolution to the events of 28 February 2001… After all the time and expense nothing has actually changed that wasn't known by the middle of the morning on the crash day except that the life of another family has been ruined… Which is why I am anxious to add my support to the call you have made for more facts to be released and real changes to take place."

The "only opportunity" for this is at the coroner's inquest which, he hopes, will take place in conditions that allow full disclosure of information about the crash, including the provision of barriers and the role of the crashed trains.

MMR: TRIPLE-JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

ANOTHER week, another scientific review of the triple vaccine MMR... and another set of headlines proclaiming "multi-jabs pose no risk to babies".

The paper, published in the US journal *Pediatrics* and reported here, made the extraordinary claim that a baby's immune system could safely cope with as many as 10,000 vaccines at any one time. The theory offered by Dr Paul Offit and others is that even before birth babies have the ability to respond to millions of antigens or "foreign" proteins which trigger the immune system.

They calculate that some vaccines contain as few as one antigen, but even if each vaccine contained 100 antigens, the very efficient human immune system even in a baby could respond to as many as 10,000 vaccines at one time.

The theory works if one is discussing vaccines such as diptheria, tetanus and Hib, which all involve the introduction of parts of dead organisms into the child and do not suppress the immune system. But it becomes meaningless when discussing the combined measles, mumps and rubella jab because it contains three live viruses which, although greatly weakened, still replicate and attack body tissue.

Dr John B. March, a scientist who develops animal vaccines, explains: "With the use of live viral vaccines, the number of antigens is neither relevant nor important: it is the way the viruses replicate in the host and the effects upon the immune system that are crucial. Many viruses (including MMR) alter the immune response, producing proteins that 'resemble' host proteins to turn sections of the immune response on and off. If they turn one part off, the host becomes more susceptible to another viral or bacterial infection."

So what happens if you introduce three live viruses together, all switching immune cells on and off? "Well there is a potential for problems," said Dr March. He knows because his trial work with animals allows him and his colleagues to study immune responses to vaccines for months if not years; taking blood samples at regular intervals to measure whether the immune system is suppressed or modified and for how long. They also do a detailed and long term clinical assessment of the animal.

This simply doesn't happen with human vaccines. It would be considered invasive to "bleed" children weekly for years. Instead blood is usually taken only on a single occasion, and the results of different children are pooled to give average results. So available data is extremely limited and the chances of picking up individual reactions small. "Immuno-suppression can easily be detected and monitored in an individual animal. With current human vaccine trials this would never be observed," said Dr March.

So animal vaccines are actually subjected to far more rigorous safety testing than human vaccines. But animal trials also raise another worrying question about the human triple jab: how effective is it? Human trials generally correlate "antibody" responses with protection – that is if the body produces antibodies (proteins) which bind to vaccine components, then it must be working and safe. Yet Dr March says antibody response is generally a poor measure of protection and no indicator at all of safety. "Particularly for viral diseases, the 'cellular' immune response is all important, and antibody levels and protection are totally unconnected."

Which brings us to the state of the research going on here and abroad involving the children who Dr Andrew Wakefield first recognised had both regressive autism and rare gut disease. As the *Eye* has already reported, many have been found to have the measles virus in their gut and bowel several years after vaccination. On the face of it, that would appear to place the pharmaceutical industry and the pro-MMR vaccine programme in some difficulty. Either the live measles vaccine virus is still infecting the child and suppressing the immune system or – and this is March's point about antibodies being no indicator of protection – the measles component of the vaccine did not work and the children caught wild measles.

Dr March believes a causal role for MMR in autism is as yet unproven, but the effects of the triple jab on the immune system do concern him. "It is statistically proven that autistic children exhibit dysfunctional immune systems. Why?" he asks. "Perhaps only 1 in 200 children may not be able to handle three live viruses and these are the ones who become autistic. But we simply do not know, because we have never done these studies and we have very little idea about what happens following vaccination.

IN THE COURTS

THE long-awaited "Donnygate" corruption trial finally got underway in Nottingham, but only after an attempt by one of the defendants, former Doncaster council deputy leader Raymond Stockhill, to avoid the trial on the grounds of ill health.

Two medical experts – Professor Harvey Saqar, a consultant neurologist from Sheffield University, and David Oakley, a consultant cardiologist at the city's Northern General hospital – explained that Stockhill had suffered a stroke in 1983 and was "too ill both physically and mentally", being "unable to walk more than 20 metres because of breathing difficulties".

However, David Farrer QC, for the prosecution, pointed out that despite his breathlessness Stockhill had continued over the next 15 years to climb the ladder of local politics. The application was dismissed.

The jury then heard the opening of the prosecution case, in which it is alleged that a developer, Alan Hughes, who had debts running into millions of pounds with a number of banks, some of which were taking legal action to recover their monies, sought to alleviate his cash-flow problems by obtaining planning permission for a residential development in Branton, Doncaster, known as the Poppyfields.

The site was designated as a countryside area, but the prosecution alleges that Hughes made corrupt payments to planning committee member Stockhill of several thousand pounds as well as a "gift" of a £150,000 farmhouse to former planning chairman Peter Birks and his mistress, Stephanie Higginson, and sums totalling £5,500 to Tory leader and local Branton councillor John Dainty, to secure planning permission that would eventually net Hughes £2.25m.

The court heard that when Birks and Higginson realised police were investigating, they attempted – with help from Hughes's financial adviser, Gordon Armitage [another defendant] – to forge a number of documents to make the gift appear a legitimate sale. These include a paybook apparently detailing mortgage repayments going back to 1994. Police inquiries revealed, however, that the type of book in question was not on sale until June 1996.

Giving evidence, officers from Doncaster's planning department spoke of the corrupt influence of the Mining Community Group, a secret cabal which ran the council from 1981. They described how this powerful group subverted planning process to the extent that they "gifted" 14 sites around Doncaster to local developers at a profit in excess of £60m.

The defendants deny all the charges. The trial is expected to continue for up to three months.

FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW- UP FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW- UP FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW- UP

■ **CAPE COMPENSATION:** After a protracted David and Goliath court battle, Cape plc has finally agreed to compensate the thousands of ill and dying black South Africans who worked in or lived near the multinational's filthy asbestos mines and factories (see *Eyes passim*).

Cape is to pay a total of £21m into a trust for the thousands of men and women who have asbestos-related illnesses as a result of the unsafe practices operated for decades in South Africa – long after the dangers of asbestosis were known and long after Cape stopped its unsafe practices in this country.

Sadly the South African workers can't claim total victory. Three hundred of the original 7,500 claimants have already died, while Cape sought for four years to deny their liability through the courts. There will be further delay – and no doubt more deaths – before the first tranche of payment, some £11m, becomes due. The next £10m will be paid at the rate of £1m a year, all, of course, depending on the company's viability.

The sum is also less than half the £50m which some would say would better compensate for the agony, suffering and subsequent financial losses they have suffered. Those with mesothelioma – a fatal, painful cancer of the lungs – will only receive about £5,250; those with asbestosis a mere £3,250. Payment is also dependent on approval by Cape's shareholders and bankers and on Cape getting an assurance from the South African government that it will not support any future claims against the company, including the costs of cleaning up the contaminated land. Clearly Cape does not subscribe to the "polluter pays" principle.

■ **WESTMINSTER HEALTH CARE:** Extraordinary details reach the *Eye* of how Westminster Health Care sought to stifle complaints of neglect and suffering of old people in its care at Lynde House (*Eyes passim*).

Father Alexander Sherbrooke had been helping relatives and carers who were raising serious concerns about the treatment of people in the £600-a-week home in Twickenham, west London. He organised a meeting between relatives and care home managers and later helped arrange the public meeting with local MP Dr Vincent Cable, which led to the compilation of a dossier of disturbing complaints and ensuing independent investigation.

But the response of Sheila Roy, group director of health care services, was to write to the local bishop and complain that "the approach of Father Sherbrooke is not facilitative... but confrontational". She complained that Sherbrooke did not want to take into account "all of the facts" and that the public meeting would cause "anxiety to other residents and staff at Lynde House".

In a not-so-thinly disguised threat of a libel action, she asks Bishop Michael Colcough: "We would welcome your input into this matter which has the potential for becoming political and which may result in us having to seek legal advice to protect our reputation and the welfare of our residents and staff."

Unfortunately Westminster Health Care ratted to the wrong bishop. Michael Colcough is an Anglican bishop – and not Father Sherbrooke's Catholic boss!

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

TOO little attention has so far been paid in the Enron scandal to its activities in Britain where ever helpful Arthur Andersen was also its very well paid auditor. But a study of some of the more than 70 Enron UK companies reveals a microcosm of the Texas energy group and its way of doing business.

While the world believed it made its money from dull but safe energy supply, it was really a highly geared dealer in high risk derivatives reliant on compliant auditors and dubious offshore accounting to hide the truth. The accounts of Enron Europe, the top company in London, contain much that illustrates how Andersen accommodated its client's need for "creative and aggressive" accounting techniques.

Enron Europe bosses did not stint when it came to their own pay. The directors shared £6m in 2000 and £8m in 1999 with the highest paid director, presumably boss Ralph Hodge, taking £900,000 and £1.25m before share options and sales were taken into account. Directors in some subsidiaries did even better. The December 1999 accounts for Enron Power Operations showed the highest paid director received a same-again £2m and exercised options on 306,000 shares which could have been sold when the price was heading towards $90. The shares are now less than $1.

Andersen was richly rewarded for being so obliging to its big American client. Last year Enron worldwide paid Andersen $1m a day in audit but mostly consultancy fees. Enron Europe mirrored that generosity. For the year to June 2000, the latest accounts available, Enron Europe paid Andersen £1.5m in annual audit fees but an even more generous £1.6m for "non audit", ie consultancy work. The year before those numbers had been lower and relationship reversed: £1.1m and £940,000. But then presumably in 2000 there was much more to hide?

But are these figures correct? For the 1999 accounts of Enron Power Operations suggest that it paid Andersen a whopping £26m! Given that the company only had a turnover of some £10m, this looks questionable. But that is the figure indicated by the accounts produced by Andersen. However, as the Enron scandal has already proved, Andersen is not very good at getting accounts right.

The Enron Europe group managed to lose no less than £367m in 2000, more than five times what it lost for 1999 – £72m – on a turnover more than doubled of £2.3bn. Its aggregate losses were just under £500m. Almost all that turnover came from trading "energy products", mostly in London. But are these losses "real" or designed to generate offsets to Enron's parent's US tax liabilities with one of the 800 offshore Enron companies on the other side of the transactions taking the profit? Such "straddle" deals have been used in the past to create phoney but tax allowable losses.

Just how "true and fair" the Enron Europe accounts are is also queried by a note buried deep in the accounts which reveals trading contracts which are "not included within the balance sheet" and which run for up to 18 years. These add up to what Enron and Andersen say are assets of more than £2bn and liabilities of £1.5bn! Just why these are not included is not clear, other than that they extend beyond the balance sheet date. Ironically, if included they might have made the balance sheet look healthier. Instead there were net liabilities of £342m and the company was dependent on a guarantee from the parent in Houston to produce accounts on a going concern basis. That guarantee is now worthless with Enron bankrupt.

The net liabilities included some £467m of "accruals and deferred income". This largely resulted from a deal whereby Enron Capital & Trade Resources received £517m (where from is not stated) for entering into two eight-year power

"There's no need for a presentation, Hoskins. If you want to quit, just say so"

purchase contracts. The money was to be filtered into the accounts over the eight years even though it had supposedly all been "received". The suspicion is that this is yet another inter-group paper payment. Enron Capital & Trade Resources entered into commodity contracts with a combined off-balance sheet value of almost $3bn.

Enron Europe owed creditors payable within a year almost £1bn. As with Richard Branson's Virgin empire, much of that debt was to other group companies. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Enron Europe – with Andersen's agreement – took advantage of loopholes that allowed it not to produce details of "related party transactions".

One that is disclosed concerns two curious partnership interests. It is undisclosed partnership interests which lay at the heart of the Enron collapse and fraud. Enron collapsed when the huge losses they generated offshore had to be revealed. The partnerships were designed by Enron with Andersen's agreement to allow the company to keep loans and losses off the parent company's balance sheet.

Enron Europe invested just under £4m in electricity marketing partnerships with group company Enrici Power Marketing. The somewhat erroneously named Enrici supplies fuel to the Teesside power station in which Enron is a shareholder. This is then turned into electricity sold to the UK electricity pool. Enron Europe's share of the losses from these partnerships was a staggering £131m making total losses of £150m.

All this is the result of having to underwrite 100 percent of the future losses from two partnerships – ECI and ENCOE – which entered into "an onerous long term energy contract". The partnerships had the right to Enrici's future net income and were supposedly guaranteed against loss. Enrici has since reacquired these valuable rights and sold them on. Just what all this disaster was about remains unclear.

Teesside has been the source of another expensive problem for Enron. It lost a court case over fees payable to the Central Area Gas Transmission Service for gas pipeline usage. The bill is £90m plus fees due until 2013 also guaranteed by the now bankrupt Enron.

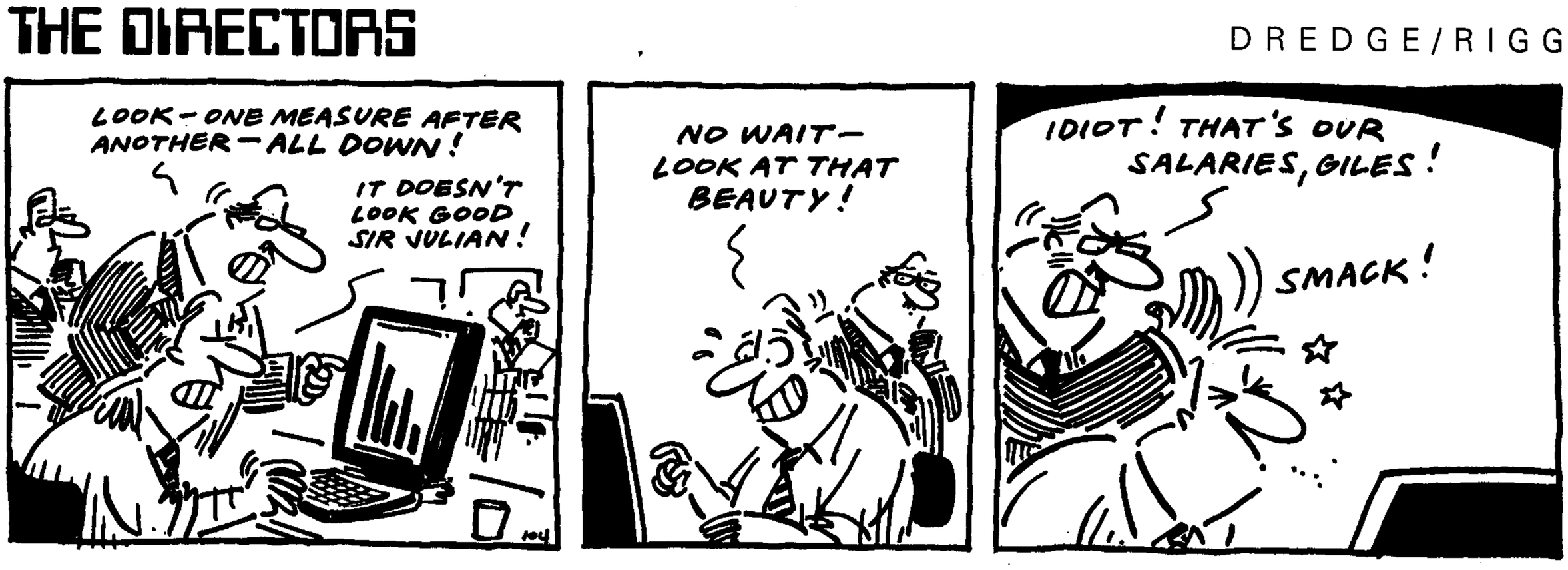
Andersen proudly declared on 31 July last that the Enron Europe accounts were "free from material mis-statement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error". We shall see. But then auditor Andersen will no doubt claim that by law it is the "new" Labour's friends, the Enron Europe directors, who are responsible for preparing the accounts.

Be that as it may, it appears more and more likely that Arthur Andersen will join the casualties of the Enron scandal. With employees, who lost their $1bn pension savings invested in Enron shares, and institutional investors baying for blood and US congressional investigators daily uncovering greater evidence of wrongdoing and cover-up, the partnership will be fortunate to survive the tidal wave of litigation which is already heading its way.

Andersen is possibly the deepest deep pocket vulnerable to shareholder action. The next in line are Enron directors and executives who sold more than $1bn worth of stock in the two years before the bankruptcy. One director, Lou Pai, realised $354m. Chairman and "Dubya" buddy "Kenny Boy" Lay netted $101m selling almost daily while encouraging workers to buy and get others to do the same. Chief executive Jeffrey Skilling pocketed $67m from December 2000 before suddenly resigning last August. All deny any knowledge of problems. Proving inside knowledge of fraud or misinformation may be difficult and recovery limited. Enron's banks may also be safe unless it can be proved they were knowingly part of the plot.

So that just leaves Andersen, which never found an "aggressive" or "creative" accounting technique it did not like so long as the client was prepared to pay big fees for the consultancy work that made the audit bean counting worthwhile. Any settlement of the Enron claims is certain to rival if not beat the record $335m Ernst & Young paid to settle claims brought by investors in Cendant, another exposed US financial fantasy.

Andersen may be hard pressed to meet such a


THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE/RIGG
LOOK – ONE MEASURE AFTER ANOTHER – ALL DOWN!
IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD SIR JULIAN!
NO WAIT – LOOK AT THAT BEAUTY!
IDIOT! THAT'S OUR SALARIES, GILES!
SMACK!

"Yet another badly spelt school-leaver's CV, Miss Parslow"

bill. In that case taking refuge within another of the Big Five may be the only answer to extinction – a sad loss. And then there were Four.

Andersen has finally fallen victim to a long standing culture of doing whatever it took to win and keep clients. More than 20 years ago Andersen discovered that John de Lorean was siphoning off money from the British taxpayer but did nothing – on grounds of client confidentiality in defiance of a clear public duty.

Far from being punished the auditor responsible Richard Maeselle became Andersen's number one bean counter. In 1994 managing partner Maeselle agreed that $128m of mis-statements in the Waste Management accounts were not "material" and the company should not be forced to reveal these phoney profits and take a hit in its earnings. Similar profit inflation occurred in 1995 with Andersen's approval. That decision cost Andersen $75m and a record $7m fine for civil fraud by the Securities & Exchange Commission. As with Enron, many of Waste Management's finance team were ex-Andersen.

Three years later Andersen discovered $51m of phoney profits at Enron. Again it agreed with former Andersen alumni that these were not "material" and so did not need to be revealed. If so they would have halved Enron's declared profit for 1997 and hurt the share price.

That same year Andersen discovered that "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap had fabricated $8m of sham profits at Sunbeam. The auditors forced Dunlap to trim the figure to $3m then allowed the phoney profit from non-existent spare parts sales on the grounds that again this was not "material". The SEC does not agree and is suing Dunlap and his auditor for fraud. Andersen has already paid $150m to Sunbeam shareholders.

For years Andersen never opposed the non-disclosure of Tomkins' chief executive Greg Hutchings' ample perks – wife and housekeeper on payroll plus flats, executive jets and more on the company tab – to shareholders as required by company law. But then it was collecting millions in fees. Because all this secret abuse was approved by Greg's cronies on the board, Andersen presumably believed this too was not "material". No doubt the reason Tomkins has quietly settled its legal action and paid Hutchings to go away.

Perhaps the demise of Enron and Andersen will finally force those who regulate accountants – including one time Andersen Consulting employee and now trade secretary Patricia Hewitt – to banish or severely restrict such concepts as "off balance sheet" or "material" which provide cover for the unscrupulous.

'Slicker'

Stock Horror

Cable TV companies: digging holes in the ground

Value of £100 invested 2 years ago in...

Adam Singer's **Telewest**

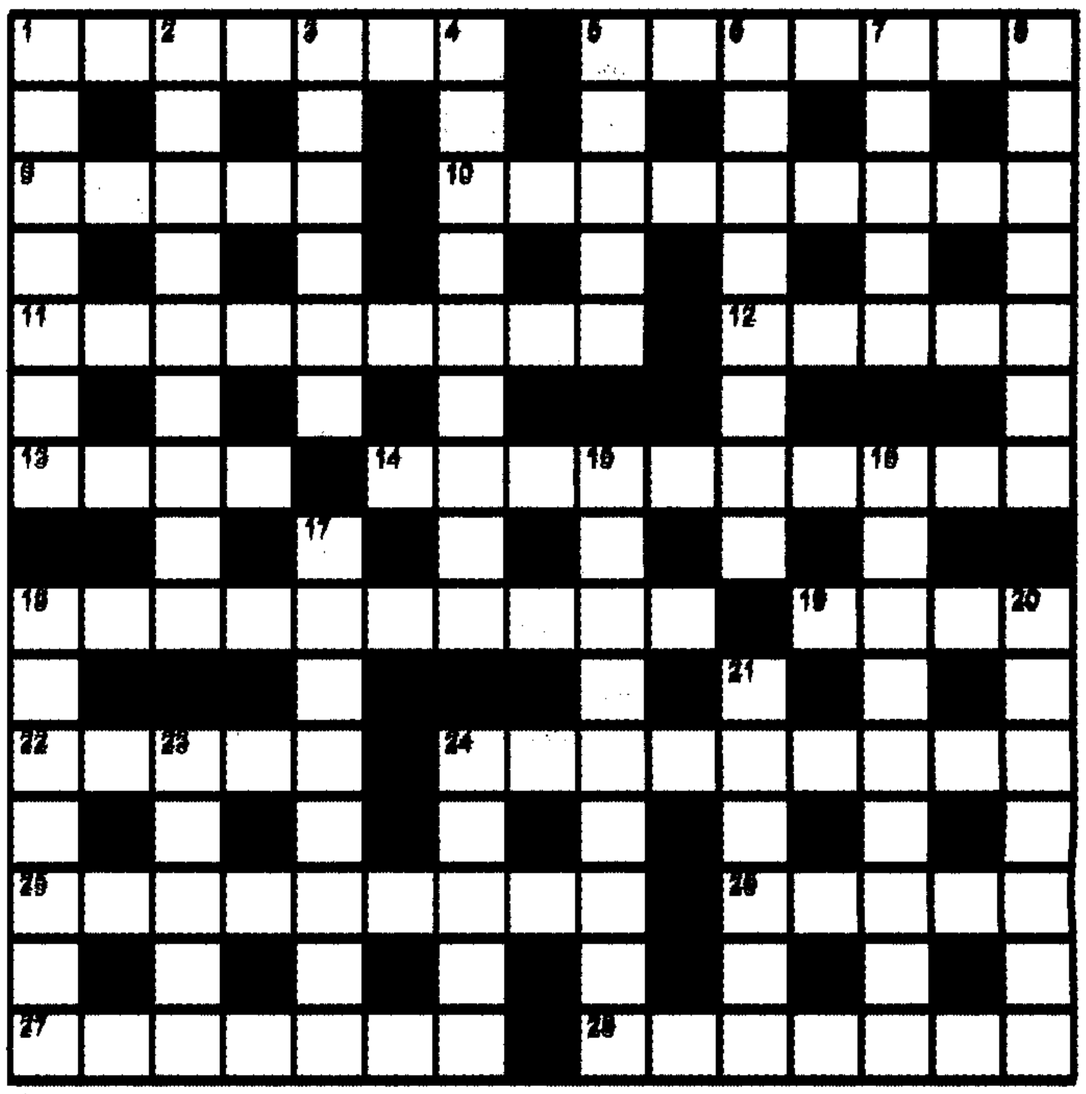
£13

Barclay Knapp's **ntl**

37p

EYE CROSSWORD 201

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 1 February 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1/19/27 Making one on scoring (7,4,3,4)
5 Saw off bollocks before producing laughs (7)
9 Putting sex back into political party is an odd thing to do (5)
10 Piss artist found in the middle of Ted Heath's secret stuff (9)
11 Animated film star puts listening device in hostess's cleavage? (4,5)
12 Take dip without resistance, being pissed (5)
13 Roger turned out finally to be a liability (4)
14 Southern batter preceded by fish balls (10)
18 Being pissed off and other siren's shit (10)
19 See 1ac.
22 Spill the beans about not entirely honourable Tony (3,2)
24 Bugger Saturday clothing pledge (5-4)
25 Arse (drinks enough for the whole group) producing loaf (3,6)
26 Tart, model, wants head from your Holiness (5)
27 See 1ac.
28 Slept about and showed off body (7)

DOWN

1 Got hold of "large sum of money found on ex-Conservative minister" plot (7)
2 Singer – fantastic big tits, old boy – sacrificing Scala opening for love (4,5)
3 They're supposed to sexually abuse kippers (6)
4 No expert, Olive, when it comes to an erection (9)
5 Stupid, cloyingly sentimental material by gutless Weldon (5)
6 You'd hardly be aware of such a slip if under a shift (8)
7 See you go down in gold (5)
8 "Live in sin" journalist into drink (5,2)
15 Underwear attachment for a swinger (9)
16 Ken's sort of people: unsociable types, academic at heart (9)
17 To a Scot, a good man will show way to mount a royal (2,6)
18 Very lewd beginning then awfully blue – just what this crossword should be (7)
20 Sex appeal, to a churchman holding an amusing organ, is looking forlorn (3-4)
21 Wear a shawl and shut your face! (4,2)
23 Cyclops enters a bit overcome (5)
24 Brazen like the salsa? (5)

Crossword 200 winner: ALISTAIR BURNETT

Solution to Crossword 200

ACROSS: 1 Limit 4 Ted Hughes 9 Genitalia 10 Prats 11 Pfennig 12 Freebie 13 Bicentennial 15 Bollock-naked 20 Olympic 22 Boorish 24 Siren 25 Railtrack 26 Tiptoeing 27 Dicks.

DOWN: 1 Leg-ups 2 Mince 3 Titanic 4 Telegenic 5 Dwarf 6 Umpteen 7 Headboard 8 Sussed 13 Booby-trap 14 Ennobling 16 Lepanto 17 Knotted 18 Corset 19 Chokes 21 Corgi 23 Isaac.

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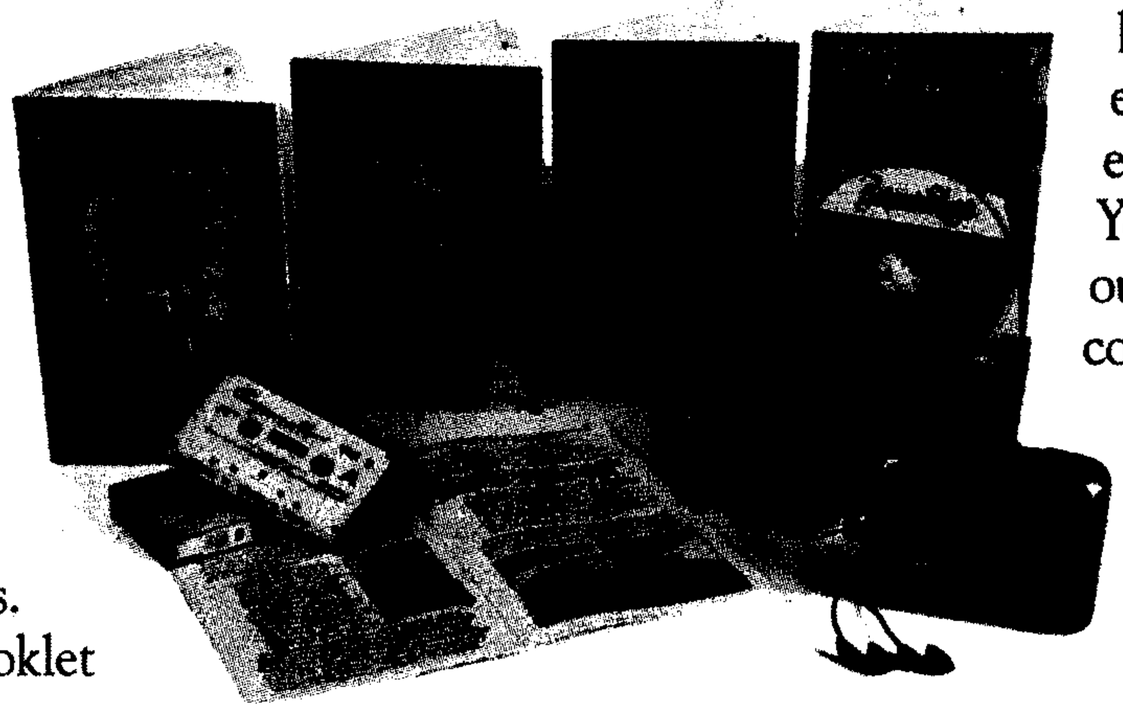

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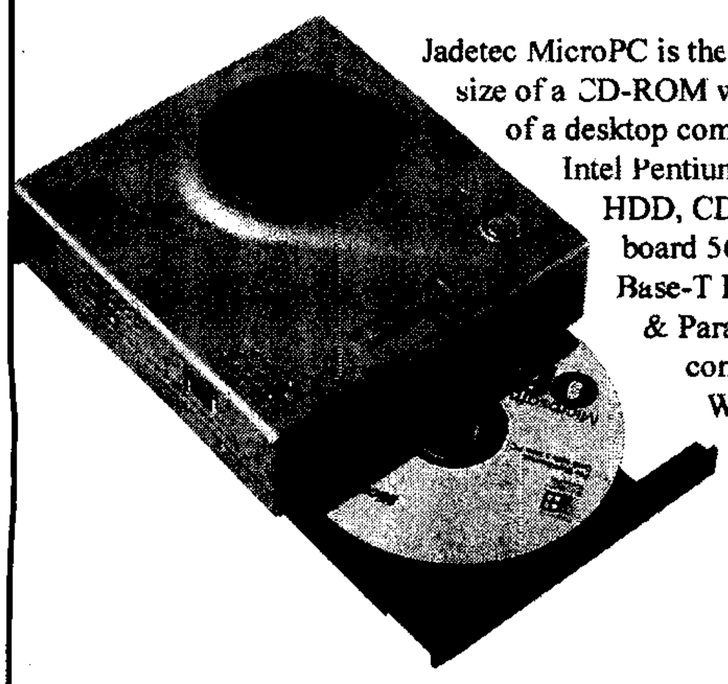

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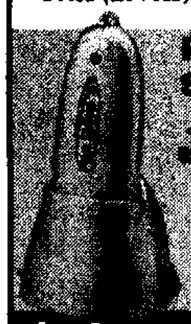

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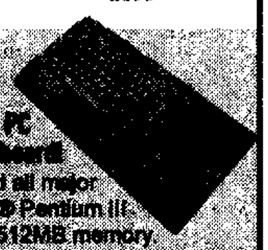

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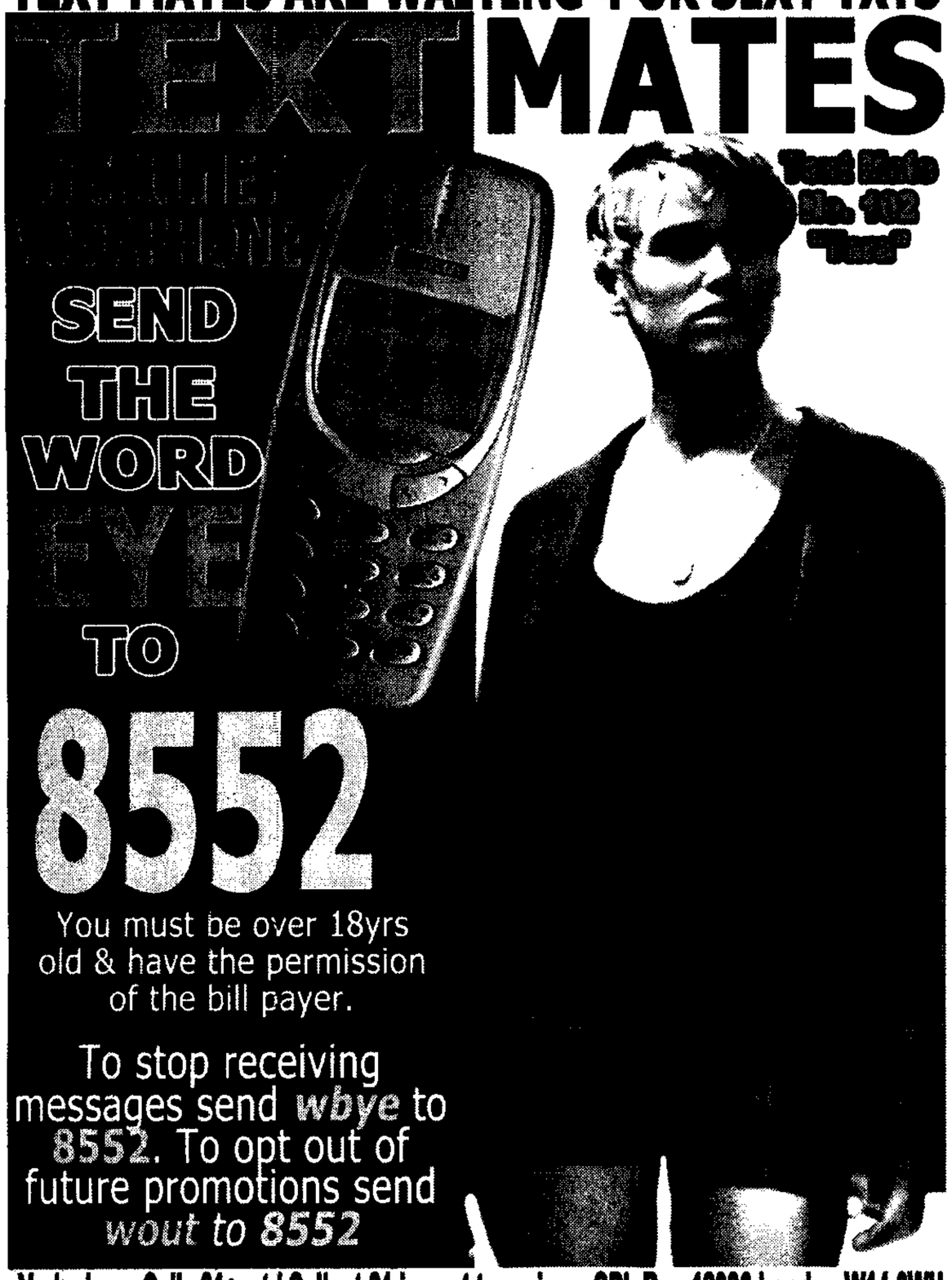

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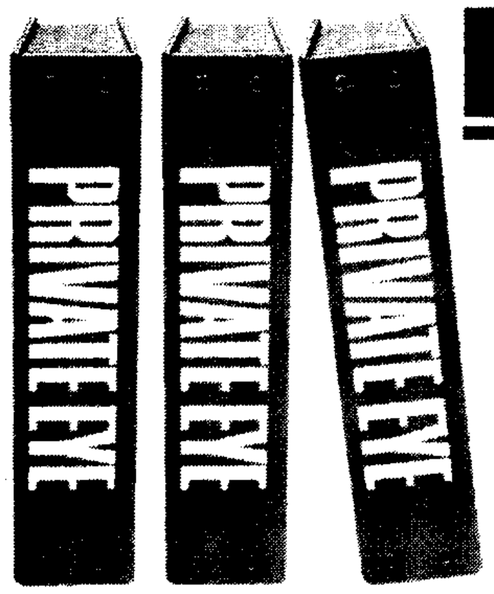

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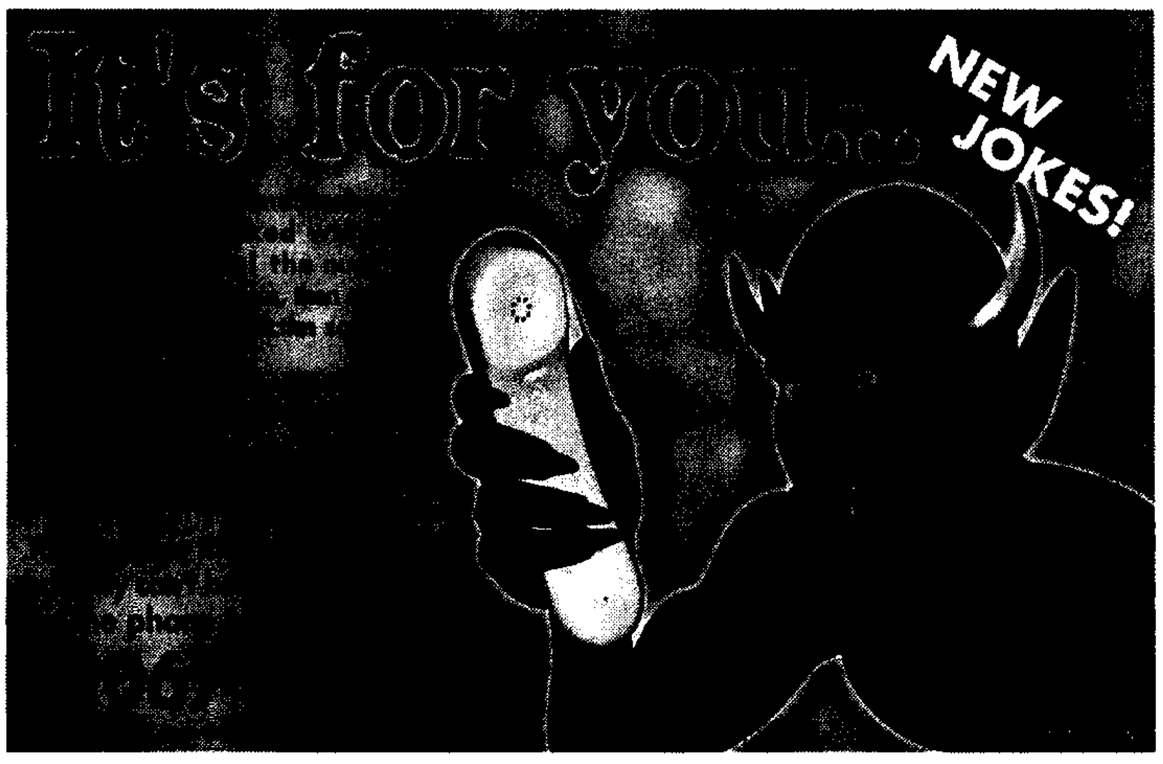

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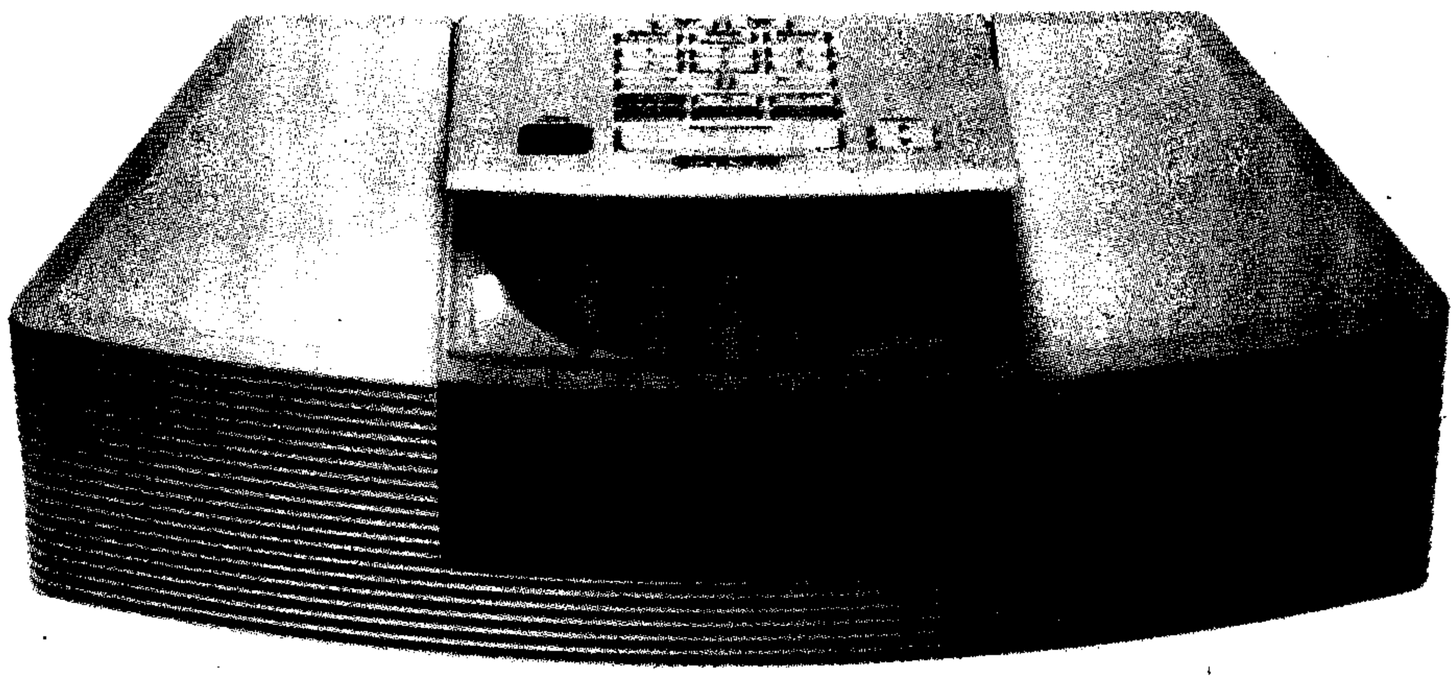

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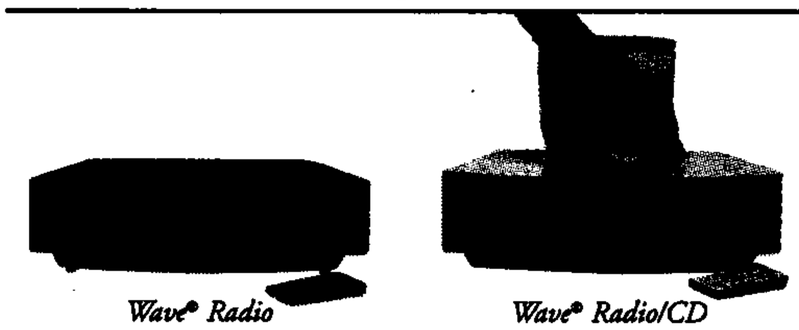

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